NATION

SC asks 'Udaipur Files' makers to await Centre view

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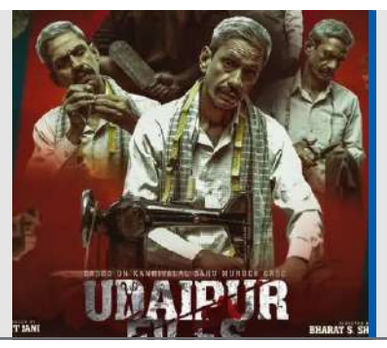

BUSINESS

JioBlackRock gets Sebi nod to launch five MF schemes

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SPORTS

Root back as No.1 in Test rankings, Australians dominate bowling

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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Centre clears Rs 24,000 cr Krishi Yojana

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana with an annual outlay of Rs 24,000 crore for six years to cover 100 districts, benefiting about 1.7 crore farmers. The scheme is in pursuance of the Budget announcement for 2025-26 to develop 100 districts to enhance agricultural productivity, increase adoption of crop diversification and sustainable agricultural practices. The 'Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana' will be implemented through the convergence of 36 existing schemes across 11 departments, other state schemes and local partnerships with the private sector, I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said while briefing reporters about the decisions taken by the Cabinet. *—PTI*

More on Page 3

NRI from Canada held in Fauja hit-and-run case

CHANDIGARH, 16 JULY

Police have arrested a Canada-based man who allegedly drove his SUV over Fauja Singh, killing the world's oldest marathoner. Officials said the accused had returned home in Punjab just three weeks ago. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Jalandhar Rural, Harvinder Singh, told a press conference that Amritpal Singh Dhillon, 26, was arrested on Tuesday night and his vehicle has also been seized. Police took the case as a challenge and solved it within 30 hours, he said. Dhillon, a native of Kartarpur, had gone to Canada on a tourist visa but got a work permit there, which is valid till 2027, the officer said, adding the accused came to India late last month. He was nabbed from his Kartarpur home. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

Indian-Canadian gangster arrested in US: Report

OTTAWA, 16 JULY

An Indian-Canadian gangster has been arrested in the US for running a transnational drug operation along with a notorious Irish gang, the local media has reported. The gangster, identified as Opinder Singh Sian, worked with the Irish Kinahan gang to smuggle methamphetamine and fentanyl precursors, Global News reported on Tuesday. He was arrested in Nevada last month by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The court documents also reveal that Sian, supported by Turkish and American criminal organisations, was involved in a conspiracy to import "precursor chemicals from China and export narcotics through the port of Los Angeles to Australia," the report added. "A Nevada judge ordered Sian, 37, held in custody pending his transfer to California," Vancouver Sun reported. *—PTI*

You need a dictionary: SC to SIT over Ashoka prof's probe

SC relaxes prof's bail rules, fumes as SIT seizes his gadgets

NEW DELHI, 16 JUL

The Supreme Court on Wednesday criticised the Haryana Police's Special Investigation Team (SIT) for misdirecting its probe into Ashoka University professor Ali Khan Mahmudabad, who was booked over social media posts related to Operation Sindoor.

The court noted the SIT had overstepped its mandate by seizing Mahmudabad's electronic devices and widening the scope of the investigation. The bench, led by Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Sandeep Mehta, stated that the probe should be confined to examining the content of the two posts in question.

Ali Khan Mahmudabad

"We are asking why SIT is, on the face of it, misdirecting itself. They were supposed to examine contents of the posts," Justice Kant remarked. The bench further said the SIT "requires a dictionary" rather than further custody or electronic devices from Mahmudabad, who has cooperated fully with the investigation.

The court also criticised the SIT for asking the professor about his travel history over the past ten years. Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Mahmudabad, said the questioning was unwarranted. The court reminded the state that the probe must follow the "right direction".

The Supreme Court relaxed Mahmudabad's bail conditions imposed on 21 May, allowing him to post content and express opinions, except on the ongoing case. On 28 May, the court had reiterated that there was no curtailment of his right to free speech, though it barred him from commenting on the matter online.

Mahmudabad faces two FIRs—one for committing acts prejudicial to maintaining communal harmony, and the other for insulting the modesty of a woman —for two posts he wrote on Army officer Sofiya Qureshi, one of the two women officers, who became the face of the government during the Operation Sindoor briefings. *—PTI*

ODISHA ERUPTS IN PROTEST

Protests broke out across Odisha on Wednesday after a college student who had set herself on fire succumbed to her injuries. The student had taken the extreme step after her complaints of sexual harassment were ignored. Tensions escalated in Bhubaneswar, where BJD leaders were injured during a clash with police. Violence erupted when demonstrators breached barricades while marching towards Lok Seva Bhavan Police deployed water cannons and tear gas to disperse the agitating crowd **PHOTO: PTI** ***>>>More on Page 4***

Karnataka BJP MLA booked in rowdy sheeter's murder

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

State BJP MLA and former minister Byrathi Basavaraj has been booked for the murder of a rowdy-sheeter-turned-realtor, who was attacked in front of his home, near Bharathi Nagar in City, police said on Wednesday.

According to police, Shivakumar alias Biklu Shivu, was assaulted by a group of eight to nine unidentified individuals armed with iron rods and machetes around 8.10pm in front of his mother. The assailants attacked the victim and fled the scene. Shivakumar was declared dead shortly. Basavaraj has been booked along with others, based on a complaint filed by the deceased's mother, police said.*—PTI* ***>>>More on Page 2***

INDONESIAN-LIKE DEAL

Trump says US will have access to India's market

WASHINGTON DC, 16 JULY

US President Donald Trump has announced progress on a trade deal with India, suggesting that Washington is close to securing market access long denied to American exporters.

"We're going to have access into India," Trump said during a press briefing, emphasising that US industries had been previously shut out. He credited his tariff strategy for forcing countries to open up their markets.

This announcement comes as Trump finalised a trade agreement with Indonesia, declaring it a "very good deal" on his social media platform, Truth Social. Under the deal, Indonesian exports to the US will face a 19 per cent tariff, while American exports will face none. Trump highlighted that the US now has "full access" to Indonesian markets, including valuable resources such as high-grade copper.

Despite Trump's claims, the Indonesian government has yet to issue a statement confirming the agreement. According to US data, Indonesia exported only $20 million worth of copper to the US last year, a fraction compared to top suppliers Chile ($6 billion) and Canada ($4 billion).

Meanwhile, India remains cautious. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal stated that New Delhi will not be rushed into any agreement and will only accept a deal that aligns with national interests. India is resisting US pressure to lower duties on agriculture and dairy products—sectors it has historically protected. It is also negotiating relief on high US tariffs on steel, aluminium, and automobiles.

A commerce ministry team is currently in Washington for further negotiations. The new reciprocal tariff structure is set to take effect on 1 August. *—PTI*

NATO CHIEF THREATENS INDIA WITH TARIFFS OVER RUSSIA TIES

WASHINGTON, 16 JULY

Echoing US President Donald Trump's stance on imposing economic sanctions against countries maintaining trade ties with Russia if Moscow doesn't put an end to the conflict in Ukraine, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte on Tuesday urged India, China, and Brazil to reconsider their economic relations with Russia. Trump had earlier threatened to impose 100 per cent "secondary tariffs" on countries which trade with Russia, in an attempt to pressurise Moscow to end the conflict. "If you live now in Beijing or in Delhi, or you are the President of Brazil, you might want to take a look at this because this might hit you very hard," Rutte said. He urged them to "make the phone call" to Russian President Putin. *—PTI* ***>>>More one Page 6***

After Tagore, Ray's home razed in B'desh

MYMENSINGH, 16 JULY

After the recent vandalism at Rabindranath Tagore's ancestral home, the demolition of Satyajit Ray's ancestral residence in Bangladesh has sparked fresh concerns over the fate of shared cultural heritage.

The century-old house in Mymensingh, formerly home to Ray's grandfather and celebrated writer Upendra Kishor Ray Chowdhury, is being torn down by the Bangladesh government to make way for a semi-concrete building to house the Mymensingh Shishu Academy. Following the news, India's Ministry of External Affairs expressed regret and urged Bangladesh to reconsider. "Given the building's landmark status, symbolising Bangla cultural renaissance, it would be preferable to repair and convert it into a museum of literature," the ministry said, adding that India would extend cooperation for the restoration.

The building, located on Harikishore Ray Chowdhury Road, had been abandoned for a decade and was deemed unsafe. *—PTI*

HELD CAPTIVE FOR 11 DAYS

Rajasthan woman raped by 7 in car

JAIPUR, 16 JULY

A man in Rajasthan's Alwar district has filed an FIR at the Bagad Tiraya police station on 2 June, alleging that his wife was abducted, gang-raped by a group of seven men and held captive for 11 days. She said she was left unconscious on the roadside after the ordeal.

The man's complaint said the ordeal began on the night of 24 April, when his wife stepped outside her home to relieve herself. He said she was taken to a place near Paniyala Road, where they and four others took turns raping her inside the vehicle. The man alleged that his wife was held captive for 11 days and subjected to repeated rape. They recorded video of their acts and threatened to circulate them on social media in case she approached police, he said.

"Three men came in a Bolero vehicle. They took me to a spot where four others joined them, and they took turns raping me. I tried to scream but they stuffed a cloth into my mouth and tied my hands and legs. They put a gun to my head and threatened to kill me if I informed anyone about the crime. They again threatened me after the case was filed. They offered me Rs 3 lakh to withdraw my complaint and threatened to kill me if I refused," she said. *—Agencies*

India advises citizens against non-essential travel to Iran

TEHRAN, 16 JULY

The Indian mission in Iran has advised its citizens to consider the evolving situation before undertaking non-essential travel to the country.

The Indian embassy in Iran also advised the citizens to continue to monitor the latest regional developments and follow updated advisories issued by the Indian authorities before visiting the country.

"In view of the security-related developments over the past several weeks, Indian nationals are advised to carefully consider the evolving situation before undertaking non-essential travel to Iran," the Indian Embassy said in an advisory posted on X.

"Indian nationals already in Iran, and interested in leaving, may avail the commercial flight and ferry options which are available right now," it said in the advisory.

The advisory has been issued given the security situation in the region and the recent conflict following Israel's launch of "Operation Rising Lion" last month against Iran. *—PTI*

T'gana, Andhra reach key water agreement

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy announced that the Centre has approved key proposals to resolve long-standing water-sharing disputes with Andhra Pradesh.

Both states will install telemetry systems at reservoirs. The states also agreed to establish the Godavari River Management Board in Hyderabad and the Krishna River Management Board in Andhra. A joint panel will address inter-state issues, while Andhra will undertake repairs at Srisailam project. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

After AI crash report, demand for CCTVs in cockpits grow

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau of India's (AAIB) interim reports about the Air India crash has sparked a debate, with people in India and abroad questioning why cockpits in planes are not equipped with cameras to document the decisions and actions taken in crucial moments.

"Why did you cut off the fuel," asked one of the pilots of the ill-fated Air India Boeing 787-8. "I did not do so," replied the other. AAIB's interim report revealed this conversation from moments before the crash to have been recovered from the flight audio recorder.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Though retro-fitting cockpits with cameras may be challenging in the present fleet of planes, fitting new planes with cameras is possible.

However, pilots argued that footage from cockpits would violate privacy as pilots behave in a carefree manner in high-stress situations and where junior pilots question observations and decisions of seniors. There is also a possibility of airline companies spying on them.

The revelation of the cockpit voice recorder fuelled multiple theories, including sabotage and suicide. *—Agencies*

NO-BLAME DISCLAIMER

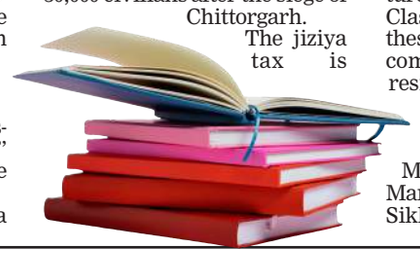
Class 8 books now teach Mughals' 'brutality'

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

The newly released NCERT Class 8 textbook 'Exploring Society: India and Beyond' presents a revised perspective on the Mughal era, describing Emperor Akbar's reign as a mix of "brutality and tolerance" and Babur as a "ruthless conqueror". Aurangzeb is labelled a "military ruler" who reimposed the jiziya tax on non-Muslims.

The book, part of the updated NCERT curriculum, introduces students to the Delhi Sultanate, Mughals, Marathas, and colonial rule. A preface titled 'Note on Some Darker Periods in History sets' the tone, urging students to examine the "historical origin of cruel violence, abusive misrule or misplaced ambitions of power" without assigning blame to the present.

Akbar, long portrayed as a tolerant monarch, is now depicted as having ordered the massacre of approximately 30,000 civilians after the siege of Chittorgarh.



The jiziya tax is described as "humiliating", allegedly encouraging conversion to Islam, marking a departure from earlier, more neutral Class 7 descriptions. Despite these violent episodes, the book commends Indian society's resilience in rebuilding temples, towns, and economies. In contrast to the critical tone towards the Mughals and Sultanate, the Marathas, Ahoms, Rajputs and Sikhs are celebrated. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Ajay Shrivastava takes charge as HAL's Chief

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

Ajay Kumar Shrivastava assumed charge as director (Engineering and R&D) of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) on 15 July, a company statement said on Wednesday. Earlier, he was the executive director of Aircraft Research & Design Centre at HAL, it said. Shrivastava began his career at HAL in 1988 as a Management Trainee (Technical). Throughout his 37-year tenure, he has held several key leadership positions, including the head of the ARDC and Head of the Transport Aircraft Research and Design Centre. He contributed to major projects such as the avionics upgrade of the HS-748 fleet, the Do-228, the Sea King helicopter, and the IL-78, the release said. Under his leadership, HAL secured DGCA certification for two Do-228 aircraft. *—PTI*

Two panchayat staffers sacked for MGNREGS fraud

RAICHUR, 16 JULY

Two Gram Panchayat staffers were removed from service for dereliction of duty after they allegedly maintained fraudulent attendance records under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in this district, officials said on Wednesday. The disciplinary action was initiated by the Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Panchayat against Nirupadi and Jayamma, posted at Nagalapur Gram Panchayat in Lingasugur Taluk, they said. Nirupadi served as a barefoot technician and Jayamma worked as a gram kayaka mitra, both contract jobs. They were responsible for supervising and uploading attendance records. Both of them were removed from their posts. *—PTI*

Cop dies by suicide in Chikkaballapur police station

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 16 JULY

Rajashekar, the head constable of the Manchenanahalli Police Station in Chikkaballapur district died by suicide in the changing room attached to the police station, on Wednesday. One of his colleagues found Rajashekar hanging and alerted others. Police said he committed suicide due to family issues. The victim had spoken to his colleague, Nagendra Prasad on 15 July after returning from Hudugur where he had been on duty. After returning from routine duty, he headed for the changing room, where he died. *—Salar News*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support

Pourakarmikas ask CM to make ex Mysuru mayor MLC

MYSURU, 16 JULY

Various Pourakarmika associations have urged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to nominate former mayor Narayan as a Member of the Legislative Council (MLC). R Das, President of Mysuru Kolache Nivasigala Hokkuta, said that the association has requested Siddaramaiah to allocate one of the four MLC seats to Narayan as he had been a voice of the pourakarmikas for over 40 years. "As pourakarmikas, we are unable to contest elections. Hence, we appeal to the CM to nominate Narayan as an MLC to ensure our voices continue to be heard," he said. State Pourakarmika Maha Sanga's District President S Nagaraju said that Narayan nomination will help convey grievances to the government, adding that Narayan also played a key role in rehabilitating urban poor. *—Salar News*

K'taka fumes as Andhra tries to poach aerospace industry

Andhra says it has land after govt scraps Devanahalli project

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

Andhra Pradesh and State are once again in a brawl over aerospace land. Andhra Pradesh IT Minister Nara Lokesh invited the aerospace industry to invest in his state after the Karnataka government scrapped the acquisition of 1,777 acres of land in Devanahalli after farmers' protests.

Lokesh tagged a news report on X and said, "Dear Aerospace industry, sorry to hear about this. I have a better idea for you. Why don't you look at Andhra Pradesh instead? We have an attractive aerospace policy for you, with best-in-class incentives and over 8,000 acres of ready-to-use land (just outside Bengaluru)! Hope to see you soon to talk across the table."

In response, State Minister for Large and Medium Industries MB Patil said, "No industry will leave Karnataka, the Minister for Large and Medium Industries said, "Dear Nara Lokesh, Karnataka doesn't just offer land - it offers India's No.1 aerospace & defence ecosystem. We've built the country's strongest aerospace base over the decades, contributing 65 per cent of India's aerospace output and ranking No.1 nationally, 3rd globally."

MB Patil PHOTO: FB

Nara Lokesh PHOTO: WEF

- Andhra Pradesh's Nara Lokesh said that his state had plenty of land, to which Karnataka Minister MB Patil said it wasn't just about land; it was about the culture

Noting that it wasn't about land alone - it was about talent, innovation, and a proven ecosystem, he said, "We know what to do, when to do it, and how to do it. Nothing is slipping off."

"Karnataka will be one of the first States to reach a USD 1 trillion economy. And it's not just aerospace; many new industries continue to choose Karnataka, and existing ones keep expanding here. We'll always ensure the land and ecosystem needed to support both growth and new investments. Best wishes to your state (Andhra Pradesh) as well," he told Lokesh.

The jabs come after the State government on Tuesday withdrew plans to acquire 1,777 acres of land in Devanahalli taluk following 1,198 days of protest by farmers.

Patil added that State contributes 65 per cent to the country's aerospace and defence sector. *—PTI*

> **Not only aerospace and defence, whichever industry it may be, whether IT or deep tech or AI, for everyone I am ready to give them the amount of land they require, at the place they want, near Bengaluru itself.... We will not allow a single industry to go out of Karnataka for the sake of land**
>
> —MB Patil, Minister for Medium and Large Industries

> **If we are not able to give land in Devanahalli, we will give it at some other place. We will definitely not let the other investors go to other states, such as Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu. We will definitely convince them to invest in Karnataka**
>
> —G Parameshwara, Home Minister

> **You should ask why (Nara Lokesh) tweeted now.... The farmers had a strong opinion that (Devanahalli) land should not be given to anyone else. We have asked farmers to voluntarily give us their land. It doesn't mean the project is scrapped**
>
> —Santosh Lad, Labour Minister

Conduct caste census like T'gana: Cong to Centre

Former Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot, State Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and others during the OBC Advisory Council in City on Wednesday PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

The Congress OBC Advisory Council meeting, on Wednesday, urged the Centre to carry out the proposed national caste census, taking the Telengana caste survey as a model. State Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, under whose leadership the two-day meeting was held in City, said a resolution was passed in this regard.

Calling the resolutions the "Bengaluru Declaration", he said, "The Census must include social, economic and educational, employment, political aspects of each individual and caste."

The second resolution said that Congress will break the 50 per cent cap on reservation, thereby ensuring a suitable quota for the OBC in education, service, political, and other areas.

The third resolution is that there should be a reservation for OBCs in private educational institutions as per Article 15 (4) of the Indian Constitution.

They also resolved to carry out "an intense and fierce nationwide campaign" to insist on these demands.

The Advisory Council unanimously thanked "Nyaya Yoddha" (fighter for justice) Rahul Gandhi for taking up the cause of social justice for the marginalised sections of society.

> **India cannot be a true democracy if OBCs, SCs, STs, and minorities -- the AHINDA communities -- are merely counted but not heard. This is not just a fight for reservation. It is a fight for dignity, recognition, and real power for those historically denied it**
>
> —Siddaramaiah, State Chief Minister

"On behalf of all the backward classes of India, the council conveys its upfront appreciation and credits Rahul Gandhi's contribution for this historic achievement," he said.

Terming the Centre's decision for a caste survey as a milestone, Siddaramaiah said it was only a small step of the Congress in ensuring social justice as envisaged by the Indian Constitution.

Former Rajasthan chief minster Ashok Gehlot also moved a resolution aimed at strengthening Congress OBC leadership.

The committee also decided to coordinate and organise mega public rallies in various state capitals, addressed by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi.

In response, the BJP called the meeting an "election gimmick", aimed for the upcoming Bihar elections. *—PTI*

Now, HCM claims that the Sigandur Bridge was State's project

MYSURU, 16 JULY

State Social Welfare Minister HC Mahadevappa said that the Sigandur bridge was the Congress government's project. The bridge was inaugurated by Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, even though the ruling government boycotted it.

Mahadevappa said that the project was prepared during his tenure in 2013, when he was the State PWD minister.

"We had prepared a detailed plan to build the bridge in 2013," he said.

He said the then speaker K a g o d u Thimmappa also requested him to construct the bridge.

However, the project was transferred to the Union government, due to the rising cost, he said.The project was sanctioned after a request from former BJP chief minister BS Yediyurappa.

He added the Centre bypassed protocol by not consulting or inviting Chief Minister Siddaramaiah for the inauguration of the Rs 473 crore bridge, which is set to become the country's second largest cable bridge. *—Salar News*

CCTV footage of the alleged theft at City's Gali Anjaneya Temple, which the State said epitomises the mismanagement PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Won't stay govt takeover of Gali Anjaneya Temple: HC

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

The Karnataka High Court on Wednesday declined to grant a stay on the State government's decision to take control of the renowned Gali Anjaneya Temple, following allegations of corruption and administrative irregularities by its managing trust.

Justice Sunil Dutt Yadav heard a petition filed by the temple's trustees challenging the takeover order.

The trust, represented by advocate P Prasanna Kumar, accused the government of acting without due process or a detailed inquiry into the temple's internal affairs.

The temple's legal counsel argued that the move was precipitate and based on incomplete data. He asserted that the trust had submitted the necessary records as required and claimed the government acted without considering the documents.

Countering these claims, the government's counsel alleged that the temple trust had not provided satisfactory responses to repeated requests for financial and administrative records.

"Over the last 19 years, the income has been entirely shown as expenditure, with no proper documentation. Not a single financial record has been submitted," the government lawyer stated.

The State also pointed to a recent theft from the temple's donation box as evidence of poor management.

A report by an assistant commissioner flagged not only the theft incident, but also internal discord among trust members. These findings prompted the Muzrai Department to issue an official order taking over the management. *—PTI*

BJP MLA booked for rowdy sheeter's murder in City

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

State BJP MLA and former Minister Byrathi Basavaraj was booked for the murder of a rowdy-sheeter-turned-realtor.

Shivakumar alias Biklu Shivu was assaulted by a group of eight to nine unidentified individuals armed with iron rods and machetes around 8.10pm, near Bharathi Nagar in City, police said.

Shivaprakash's mother, Vijayalakshmi, in her complaint, said she saw eight to nine people "assaulting" her son with iron rods and machetes. When his friend tried to intervene, they hit him too with an iron rod.

"Those unknown individuals murdered my son and fled the scene in a white Scorpio vehicle and a two-wheeler. I can identify them if I see them," Vijayalakshmi said in her complaint. She also claimed the accused had been calling and threatening her son over the phone.

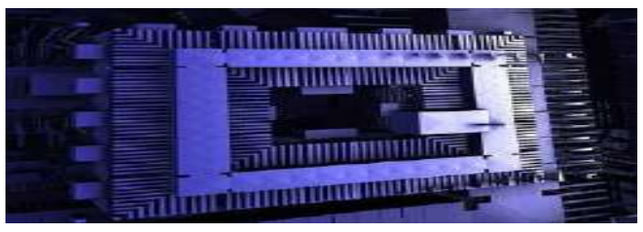
The police have registered a case against Basavaraj along with Jagadeesh, Kiran, Vimal, and Anil.

On 11 February, Jagadeesh and Kiran allegedly encroached on Shivaprakash's property in Kitaknoor and evicted two female security guards, she added.

Police said that Shivaprakash had 11 cases registered against him and a rowdy sheet opened in 2006. *—PTI*

State eyes $20B quantum driven economy

BENGALURU, 16 JULY



The Karnataka government on Wednesday reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the growth of the quantum technology sector to make the state a USD 20 billion quantum advantage-driven economy by 2035. The government also announced the formation of a 'Quantum Task Force' along with a strategic roadmap.

The 'Quantum India Bengaluru Summit' is scheduled to place in the state from 13 July to 1 August.

A high-level meeting was convened at Vidhana Soudha by the Department of Science & Technology, where key representatives from leading quantum technology companies participated to discuss the summit, alongside Ministers NS Boseraju (Minor Irrigation, Science & Technology), MB Patil (Industries), and Priyank Kharge (IT&BT).

"Our goal Karnataka a USD 20 billion quantum advantage-driven economy by 2035. As part of this vision, India's first 'Quantum India Conclave' will be held," Boseraju said. Patil said that the State government would offer land, infrastructure and all types of support needed for industries to thrive. Industry representatives are to submit their specific requirements.

Kharge said the State will emerge as a major stakeholder in quantum ecosystem. *—PTI*

Lawyers ask CM for SIT probe into D'sthala burials

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

A group of advocates met State Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday, urging him to constitute a Special Investigation Team (SIT) monitored by a sitting or retired judge of the Supreme Court or High Court to probe cases of disappearances, unnatural deaths, and sexual assaults in Dharmasthala over the past two decades.

Citing recent media reports and a statement made in court by a sanitation worker who claimed to have buried "hundreds of bodies" in the area, the advocates—including former chairman of the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes, CS Dwarakanath — alleged that although an FIR has been registered and an investigation is underway, these bodies reportedly remain unexhumed.

Given the gravity of the alleged crimes, the memorandum submitted to the CM said that the "distressing information" suggested the involvement of "highly influential" and "powerful personalities" with significant political clout. *—PTI*

Orange alert for 3 State districts

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued orange alert for heavy rainfall in Uttar Kannada, Udupi and Dakshina Kannada. It said heavy rain would hit south-interior State between 16-21 July.

IMD also predicted strong surface winds (speed reaching 40-50kmph) very likely over South Peninsular India during next 5 days. *—Agencies*

LIVING IN GOKARNA CAVE

Russian woman ran away: Ex seeks shared custody

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

Days after Russian woman Nina Kutina was found living in a cave deep inside the forest in Gokarna with her two daughters, her ex-husband, an Israeli citizen, is demanding shared custody of their daughters.

"I just want to be able to see my daughters a few times a week and take care of them, too. My concern is that if they go to Russia now, it will get tougher to keep in touch with them. So, I wish they could stay in India," said Goldstein.

Dror Goldstein, 38, who said he lives for nearly six months a year in Goa, said he had been living separately from Kutina, 40, for the last couple of years and that he "lost touch" with them when she took the daughters and left Goa a few months ago. Goldstein said he filed a missing report with the police after that.

Security personnel find a Russian woman and her two children from a remote cave in Ramatirtha hills, in Uttara Kannada PHOTO: PTI

"I managed to find them on a beach in Gokarna, but Kutina refused to let me be with my children as I don't live with them anymore," added Goldstein.

He said he met Kutina in Goa around 2017 and they had been together, travelling between India and Ukraine, until they split.

He said he had left India around March, and because of the war, he couldn't come before this.

"When I heard the news, I booked a flight immediately to Bengaluru to try and meet them," said Goldstein.

The girls, Prema, 6, and Ama, 4, were found with Kutina in a secluded cave in the Ramatirtha hills of Kumta taluk on 11 July. Police had said that all three had lived in isolation for nearly three weeks before they were found. Kutina said that her life in the cave was not as it was being portrayed in the media. *—PTI*

BESCOM worker kills self after 'digital arrest' scam

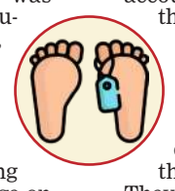
BENGALURU, 16 JULY

A 48-year-old Bangalore Electricity Supply Company (BESCOM) employee died by suicide after he allegedly fell prey to a "digital arrest" scam, losing Rs 11 lakh, police said on Wednesday.

Kumar K, who was employed on a contractual basis with BESCOM, hailed from Kelagere village in Channapatna taluk in Bengaluru South district, they said.

He was found hanging from a tree in his village on Tuesday, police said.

According to the police, in the death note, Kumar stated that he received a call from a man named Vikram Goswami who claimed to be a CBI officer and threatened him of digital arrest. The fraudster claimed he had an arrest warrant against Kumar and demanded money to evade digital arrest. Kumar initially deposited Rs 1.95 lakh as per the demands of the fraudster. However, he kept demanding more money. In total, Kumar claimed to have transferred Rs 11 lakh into several bank accounts as instructed by the fraudsters.



Digital arrest is a term used in cyber frauds where victims are falsely told they are under surveillance or legal custody through digital means. They are often isolated via continuous video or call surveillance by fraudsters posing as officials and manipulated into following instructions without alerting others .*—PTI*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support

PHOTO: ANI

Stalin: Taking steps to retrieve Katchatheevu

CHENNAI, 16 JULY

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Wednesday asserted that the DMK government is taking all necessary steps to retrieve Katchatheevu, to bring about a permanent solution to the fishermen issue. Stain had earlier requested the Centre to ensure the release of Indian fishermen "suffering" in Sri Lankan prisons. He also wrote to PM Narendra Modi, requesting him to take immediate steps to review the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement so that Katchatheevu Island is retrieved and the traditional fishing rights of the state's fishermen are protected. 530 Indian fishermen were arrested in 2024, while 147 were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy in 2025. *—ANI*

Did 'illegals' vote in LS polls? Prashant asks ECI

KISHANGANJ, 16 JULY

Jan Suraaj founder Prashant Kishor has attacked Bihar BJP chief Dilip Jaiswal, alleging that he has "captured a Sikh college", created a nexus and is exploiting people. He said that 60 per cent of people in Bihar want change. BJP has not responded to his charges against Jaiwsal. Kishor also questioned the ECI about voter list for Lok Sabha elections: "If they are saying that there are Nepalis and Bangladeshis here.....the voter list used for the Lok Sabha elections included a large number of Bangladeshis or illegal people". *—ANI*

Terrorist killed in J&K was top JeM leader

JAMMU, 16 JULY

Jammu and Kashmir Director General of Police Nalin Prabhat on Wednesday said the terrorist eliminated in an encounter in Dudu-Basantgarh forest in Udhampur district was a top commander of Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) outfit who was active in the area for the last four years. Asserting that the security forces are continuing their operations to neutralise terrorists, he said that the police cannot be successful without the support of the people. On 26 June, JeM terrorist Haider, code-named Maulvi, from Pakistan, was killed in a gunfight while three of his associates managed to escape, taking advantage of inclement weather, challenging topography and dense forest in the Basantgarh area. However, the DGP declined to give the exact number of terrorists active in the forest areas of the Jammu region and said "that number cannot be given in the public domain."*—PTI*

Andhra CM seeks Rs 563 cr for sports infrastructure

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu met Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Minister, Mansukh Mandaviya, on Wednesday, and sought Rs 538 crore for establishing stadiums and Rs 25 crore for organising the Khelo India Martial Arts Games this year. He sought an early completion of infrastructure development projects in various districts. TDP supremo further demanded that an international-standard badminton training centre and a national aquatic sports training hub in Amaravati, Khelo India centres in districts, and a Sports Authority of India training centre in Tirupati are established. He requested Rs 27 crore for developing Vijayawada's Indira Gandhi Stadium, Rs 170 crore for a multi-sport complex at BR Stadium in Guntur and Rs 341 crore for sports development.*—PTI*

T'gana, Andhra to form panel to resolve water row

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Wednesday said the Centre has agreed to several crucial proposals aimed at resolving long-pending water-sharing disputes between the state and Andhra Pradesh, including setting up telemetry systems and river management boards.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting with Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil here, Telangana Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy said both states have agreed to implement telemetry systems at all water projects and reservoirs to accurately measure water usage — a long-standing demand of Telangana. Andhra Pradesh has agreed to the move, he added.

- A joint committee will be constituted to examine all pending water issues between both the Telugu states.

In a significant breakthrough, the two states have also agreed to set up the Godavari River Management Board (GRMB) in Hyderabad and the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB) in Andhra Pradesh, the chief minister said.

These boards will help oversee water allocations and usage under the Krishna and Godavari river systems, which have been contentious issues since the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014.

"The Centre has also directed Andhra Pradesh to undertake immediate repair work on the Srisailam project, which is crucial for water supply and power generation for both states," Reddy said.

Additionally, a joint committee will be constituted to examine all pending inter-state water issues.

"These are landmark decisions that reflect a spirit of cooperation between Telangana and Andhra and also the Centre's commitment to ensuring water justice to both states," he said. *—PTI*

Old weapons can't win new wars: CDS

Chauhan calls for better India-made drones

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan on Wednesday warned that India must urgently modernise its defence systems, stating that "today's warfare has to be fought with tomorrow's technology."

Speaking at a workshop on the indigenisation of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and Counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems (C-UAS) at the Manekshaw Centre, the CDS highlighted the strategic importance of developing homegrown drone technologies. He cautioned that relying on foreign technologies not only weakens India's defence preparedness but also compromises operational surprise.

"Recent global conflicts have shown how drones can disproportionately shift tactical balance," General Chauhan said. "Asymmetric drone warfare is making large platforms vulnerable, forcing militaries to rethink their doctrines and develop adaptive responses."

Referencing Operation Sindoor, India's counter-offensive following the Pahalgam terror attack, he noted that while Pakistan deployed loiter munitions and unarmed drones on 10 May, none caused damage. "Most were neutralised through kinetic and non-kinetic means, and some were recovered nearly intact," he said, underlining the growing effectiveness of India's C-UAS capabilities.

Anil Chauhan cautioned that relying on foreign technologies compromises operational surprise PHOTO: PTI

He stressed that Operation Sindoor demonstrated the necessity of having systems "built for our terrain and needs". Imported niche technologies, he said, limit scalability, reduce availability of critical spares, and make Indian tactics predictable to adversaries. "If developed indigenously, we maintain operational surprise, at least in initial encounters," he added. *—PTI*

FOR 6 YEARS

Centre clears PM Krishi Yojana worth Rs 24K cr

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved 'Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana' with an annual outlay of Rs 24,000 crore for six years to cover 100 districts, benefiting about 1.7 crore farmers. The scheme is in pursuance of the Budget announcement to develop 100 districts to enhance agricultural productivity, increase adoption of crop diversification and sustainable agricultural practices.

The Yojana will be implemented through the convergence of 36 existing schemes across 11 departments, other state schemes and local partnerships with the private sector, I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said. The scheme will benefit about 1.7 crore farmers. The 100 districts will be identified based on low productivity, low cropping intensity and less credit disbursement.

Committees will be formed at district, state and national levels for effective planning, implementation and monitoring of the scheme.

The district plans will be aligned to the national goals of crop diversification, conservation of water and soil health, self-sufficiency in agriculture and allied sectors as well as expansion of natural and organic farming.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Resolution on Shukla's space odyssey

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday passed a resolution to congratulate Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla for the successful completion of his historic 18-day mission aboard the International Space Station.

The Cabinet adopted the resolution that termed Shukla's space journey a moment of pride, glory and joy for the entire nation and one that represented infinite aspirations of India. *—PTI*

Raj denies making remarks on tie-up with Sena (UBT)

NASHIK/MUMBAI, 16 JULY

Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray on Wednesday denied making any remarks on forging an alliance with the Shiv Sena (UBT) led by his cousin Uddhav Thackeray, and claimed that the words that he did not utter were wrongly attributed to him in a section of media.

In a post on X, Thackeray said if he wants to make any political statement, he will do so by holding a press conference.

He said the party organised a conclave for selected office-bearers at Igatpuri in Nashik on 14 and 15 July, where he held an informal interaction with journalists.

"Words, which I did not utter, were put in my mouth, claiming that the decision on the alliance would be taken after assessing the situation before the municipal elections," he said, adding that informal talks should remain informal in nature.

Additionally, with the Maharashtra local bodies elections ahead, Shiv Sena, headed by Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, on Wednesday announced an alliance with Republican Sena led by Babasaheb Ambedkar's grandson Anandraj Ambedkar. *—PTI*

I will speak more Bangla, detain me: Didi

KOLKATA, 16 JULY

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee lashed out at the BJP-led Centre on Wednesday for its policy of allegedly harassing and mistreating Bengali-speaking people across the country and warned the saffron party of dire political consequences if it did not put an immediate stop to such actions.

Banerjee also alleged that the ruling dispensation at the Centre was "influencing the Election Commission of India" to achieve its political ambitions across states.

Speaking at a public meeting after holding a protest march in Kolkata against the alleged torture of Bengali-speaking people in BJP-ruled states, she alleged, "I will challenge the central government notices which were surreptitiously sent to BJP-ruled states to harass Bengali-speaking people and detain them at the slightest suspicion."

'Will fight BJP inch by inch'

"I am ashamed and disheartened at the Centre and the BJP's attitude towards Bengalis," the CM said.

Expressing her resolve to fight the BJP "inch by inch" if it tried to "persecute" Bengali-speaking people, she said that the saffron camp should remain prepared for a fresh round of 'Khela Hobey' (the game-is-on slogan coined ahead of the 2021 state polls) during the Assembly elections in 2026.

"I have decided to speak more in Bangla from now on, hold me in detention camps if you can," she said while attacking the BJP.

Asserting that there are nearly 22 lakh migrant workers from Bengal working in other parts of the country, who have valid identity documents, she asked, "What right does the BJP have in harassing Bengalis? Is West Bengal not part of India?" *—PTI*

'BANIAN TOWEL' PROTEST

Legislators of the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi MVA on Wednesday staged a 'banian towel' protest outside the Mumbai Vidhan Bhavan to condemn the assault of a hostel canteen employee by Shiv Sena MLA Sanjay Gaikwad PHOTO: PTI

Himanta thinks he is 'raja', but will be jailed: RaGa in Assam

CHAYGAON/GUWAHATI, 16 JULY

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday claimed that though Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma thinks he is a "raja", he will be put in jail for corruption by the people of the state.

Alleging that BJP and EC "stole" Maharashtra elections from Congress and its allies, he asked party workers to be vigilant to thwart any such attempts in Assam.

"The CM thinks he is the 'raja' and is busy 24 hours a day handing over your wealth, land to Adani and Ambani. But if you listen to his voice carefully, look at his face closely on TV, fear is writ large," Gandhi said. He was addressing a party workers' meet at Chaygaon.

Gandhi claimed that the CM and his family will be held accountable for their corruption, and not even Narendra Modi or Amit Shah will be able to save him.

Responding to Gandhi's attack on him, Himanta said that Gandhi has "conveniently forgotten" that he is out on bail in multiple criminal cases registered across the country.

Kharge, Rahul asks PM to restore J&K's statehood

Meanwhile, Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge wrote to Modi to press for legislation in Parliament's upcoming Monsoon session to grant full statehood to J&K. He also called on government to bring legislation to include Union Territory of Ladakh under the Constitution's Sixth Schedule.

"This is the first time a full-fledged state has been downgraded to a UT following its bifurcation," it said. *—PTI*

Will become TN CM with single-party govt, says EPS

CHIDAMBARAM/ CUDDALORE, 16 JULY

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday in Chidambaram, AIADMK General Secretary and former CM Edappadi K Palaniswamy asserted that he will be the CM of a single-party government in Tamil Nadu.

He added that AIADMK will be in alliance with BJP for the 2026 Assembly elections, and it is only in the elections after, that he would rule the state with a single-party government.

ON ALLIANCE WITH BJP

The AIADMK -led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Tamil Nadu is stable, and no attempts to create divisions among its constituents—including the BJP—will succeed, EPS said.

Additionally, he stated that his decisions would be final regarding the alliance. The Leader of Opposition also slammed Chief Minister MK Stalin's "Ungaludan Stalin" outreach programme as a "drama" intended to "mislead" the people of Tamil Nadu ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections.

He wondered what solutions the people could expect to their issues in the remaining eight months of this government, considering four years had already passed. "Stalin thought I would not form any alliance. But once I joined hands with BJP, he got scared. When DMK allies with others, it's called a good alliance. But if AIADMK allies, is it suddenly communal?" he asked.

Meanwhile, Union Minister Amit Shah stated that the CM candidate for 2026 Assembly elections in the state will be from AIADMK. However, he did not specifically name EPS. *—Agencies*

RAGI IDLI TO GRILLED FISH

Parliament gets new health menu for MPs

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

From ragi millet idli and jowar upma to moong dal chilla and grilled fish with vegetables, Parliament's new 'Health Menu' - designed at the insistence of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla - plans to serve up a plateful of nutrition for lawmakers, officials and visitors.

Along with delicious curries and elaborate 'thalis', also on offer in the Parliament canteen menu are millet-based meals, fibre-rich salads and protein-packed soups.

Each dish has been carefully crafted to be low in carbohydrates, sodium, and calories while remaining high in essential nutrients. Besides, the Health Menu has the number of calories mentioned against the names of the dishes.

MENU HIGHLIGHTS

Millets, thrust into the national spotlight during the UN-declared International Year of Millets in 2023, take the centre stage in the menu. Highlights include 'Ragi Millet Idli' with 'Sambhar' and 'Chutney' (270 kcal), 'Jowar Upma' (206 kcal) and a sugar-free 'Mix Millet Kheer' (161 kcal).

Popular Indian staples like 'Chana Chaat' and 'Moong Dal Chilla' also feature prominently.

For lighter snacks, MPs can choose from a salads such as 'Barley' and 'Jowar Salad' while those preferring non-vegetarian meals have not been left out either.

Recognising the urgency of promoting healthier choices, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his recent Mann Ki Baat address, stressed the need for collective action to combat obesity, particularly through reducing edible oil consumption. *—PTI*

8 bills to be launched in Parl's Monsoon Session

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

A bill that seeks to preserve and protect geoheritage sites and geo-relics is among the eight new draft legislation the government plans to introduce during Monsoon session of Parliament beginning Monday.

Among the bills planned for the Monsoon session are the National Sports Governance Bill, the Geoheritage Sites and Geo-relics (Preservation and Maintenance) Bill, the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill and the National Anti-Doping (Amendment) Bill.

The Monsoon session of Parliament is scheduled to commence from 21 July.

The four other new bills are the Manipur Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill, Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, the Indian Institute of Management (Amendment) Bill & Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill.

Additionally, a panel examining the Income Tax Bill-2025 made 285 suggestions on the draft legislation that seeks to modernise and simplify the country's tax laws. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Gopal Khemka's murder: Police officer suspended

PATNA, 16 JULY

The Bihar Police on Wednesday suspended the Station House Officer (SHO) of Gandhi Maidan Police Station, Rajesh Kumar, for dereliction of duty in connection with the murder of Patna-based industrialist Gopal Khemka. The suspension order was issued by Central Range Inspector General Jitendra Rana. A senior police official confirmed the action, citing unsatisfactory investigation in this and other cases. Khemka was shot dead by a motorcycle-borne assailant outside his residence on 4 July. The attack occurred as Khemka was getting out of his car. Two suspects, including the gunman, have been arrested. Khemka was reportedly affiliated with the Bharatiya Janata Party. *—PTI*

Odisha drunk auto driver kills parents with hammer

BARIPADA, 16 JULY

A drunk auto-rickshaw driver allegedly murdered his elderly parents with a hammer in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district, police said on Wednesday. The incident occurred on Tuesday night in Dhonapal village under Baisinga police station limits. The accused, Himanshu Sahu, 55, is believed to have killed his parents — Hadibandhu, 81and Shanti Sahu, 72 following a quarrel, using a hammer meant for breaking stones. Shocking locals, he reportedly spent the night beside their blood-soaked bodies. Villagers discovered the scene the next morning and alerted police. Himanshu was arrested at the scene. His wife and children have been living separately for years due to family disputes. The bodies were sent for post-mortem at PRM Medical College, Baripada. An investigation is ongoing. *—PTI*

CBI to probe Colonel Bath assault case

CHANDIGARH, 16 JULY

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has transferred the investigation into the alleged assault of Colonel Pushpinder Singh Bath by Punjab Police personnel to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The incident occurred on the night of 13–14 March at a roadside dhaba in Patiala, reportedly over a parking dispute. Colonel Bath accused 12 officers, including four inspectors, of assaulting him and his son, snatching his ID and phone, and threatening a fake encounter—all in public view and under CCTV surveillance. Citing a lack of progress and impartiality, the court criticised the Chandigarh Police's handling of the case, noting no arrests had been made. *—PTI*

4 minors accused of raping school student in UP

GHAZIABAD, 16 JULY

A girl of class nine was allegedly raped at her home by four boys, three from her school, in a shocking incident on Sunday morning. Police said the girl was alone when a boy she'd been speaking to on Instagram arrived with three others. They reportedly forced their way in and took turns raped her. Her mother returned from the market, found the door ajar, and discovered the boys with her daughter. She rescued her, locked the boys inside, and called the police. However, housing society members allegedly released the boys before officers arrived. An FIR has been filed, but no arrests have been made yet. The girl has undergone medical examination; her statement is pending. Police continue to investigate. *—PTI*

Mob–police clash during stir over student's death

BJD seeks judicial inquiry; two ex-ministers among injured

BHUBANESWAR, 16 JULY

Police personnel use water cannons to disperse BJD workers protesting over the death of a college student in Odisha's Balasore **PHOTO: PTI**

Several BJD workers and leaders, including two former ministers, were injured in a scuffle with police personnel here on Wednesday during the protest over the death of a college student, who self immolated in Odisha's Balasore district.

The BJD's demonstration turned violent near the Lower PMG Square when the protestors breached a barricade to march towards the state secretariat, Lok Seva Bhavan, and clashed with police personnel.

The police used water cannons and fired tear gas shells to disperse them. They were later arrested.

Former ministers Pranab Prakash Das and Priti Ranjan Gharai sustained injuries. While Gharai was admitted to the Utkal Hospital's ICU, Das was taken to a private hospital.

The BJD demanded a judicial inquiry into the student's death, over alleged denial of justice in a sexual harassment incident.

Security was strengthened at the Lok Seva Bhavan and other government buildings in the city.

Employees were allowed to enter the secretariat after thorough verification of their identities and only people having prior appointments were allowed entry.

Meanwhile, markets were shut, schools and colleges were closed, and vehicles largely remained off the roads as a bandh, called by the opposition BJD, was underway in Odisha's Balasore district over the student's death.

Armed with party flags, hundreds of BJD members blocked major roads of the district by burning tyres.

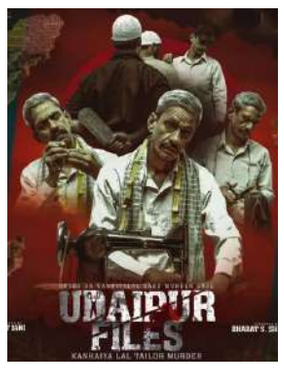
BJD workers were holding demonstrations in places like Jaleswar, Basta, Soro, Baliapal and Bhograi since morning.

The protestors were also demanding the resignation of Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj and Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, accusing them of failing to provide justice to the 20-year-old student. *—PTI*

'PROMOTES DISHARMONY'

SC asks 'Udaipur Files' makers to await Centre view

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY



The Supreme Court on Wednesday deferred for 21 July the hearing on the film 'Udaipur Files – Kanhaiya Lal Tailor Murder', and asked the filmmakers to await a decision of Centre appointed panel to hear objections against the movie.

The panel will meet on Wednesday.

The court told the filmmakers that the accused in the Kanhaiya Lal tailor murder case can't be compensated for the loss of reputation if the film is released, but the filmmakers can be in monetary terms.

The bench asked the Centre's committee to take a prompt decision after hearing all the parties. It will also accord hearing to the accused.

The film was scheduled to be released on 11 July. The Delhi High Court stayed its release till the Centre decides on pleas seeking a permanent ban over the film's potential to "promote disharmony" in society.

The petitions claimd that a trailer of the movie was replete with dialogues and instances that can lead to communal disharmony.

Accused Mohammad Riyaz and Mohammad Ghous allegedly claimed that the Udaipur-based tailor Kanhaiya Lal's murder was in reaction to his allegedly sharing a social media post in support of former BJP leader Nupur Sharma following her controversial comments on Prophet Mohammed.

The trial is pending before the special NIA court in Jaipur. *—PTI*

Power snag: Call for NEET retest

The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to hear a plea against a Madhya Pradesh High Court order refusing to direct a retest in NEET-UG 2025 for candidates aggrieved by power outage at some centres. The counsel sought an urgent listing as counselling will start from 21 July. *—PTI*

QUESTIONS RIGHT TO SUE

Where is public interest? HC bins plea against Prada over Kolhapuris

MUMBAI, 16 JULY

A team from Prada visited Kolhapur to interact with artisans and assess the manufacturing process of the footwear **PHOTO: ANI**

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday questioned the statutory right of six advocates to sue Italian fashion house Prada for its alleged unauthorised use of the famous Kolhapuri chappals, and dismissed their public interest litigation (PIL).

A bench of Chief Justice Alok Aradhe and Justice Sandeep Marne questioned the locus of the petitioners, saying they were not the aggrieved persons or the registered proprietor or owner of the footwear. "What is your (petitioners') statutory right?" the bench asked.

The plea had said the Kolhapuri chappal (sandals) is protected as a Geographical Indication (GI) under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act. The bench then said the registered proprietor of the GI tag can espouse their own action and dismissed the plea.

In their spring/summer collection, Prada showcased their toe-ring sandals, which the petition said are deceptively similar to the Kolhapuri chappals. These sandals are priced at Rs 1 lakh per pair. *—PTI*

Yemeni victim's family wants death for Nimisha

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

The family of Yemini resident Talal Abdo Mahdi has reportedly said that they would not accept anything but the death of Nimisha Priya. The Indian nurse has been sentenced to death in 2020 for Mahadi's murder in 2017.

The death sentence of Nimisha Priya, who hails from Kollengode in Kerala's Palakkad district, set to be carried out on 16 July, but it was postponed on 15 July, according to reports.

The reports quoted the Yemeni administration as saying in its order dated 14 July that the 38-year-old nurse's execution was deferred until a new date is announced.

The government of India has made concerted efforts in recent days to seek more time for Priya's family to reach a "mutually agreeable" solution with the other party, they said. *—PTI*

Elgar case: Ex-DU prof to move HC, trial court for bail

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

The Supreme Court asked former Delhi University's faculty Hany Babu to move the Bombay High Court or the trial court for bail in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case. The court dismissed Babu's plea for a clarification on the point that withdrawing the earlier appeal did not prevent the high court from hearing his bail application. Babu was accused of making alleged inflammatory speeches at the Elgar Parishad conclave, in Pune, triggering violence. *—PTI*

Gujarat's Banni Grasslands ready to host cheetahs

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

- A 600-hectare enclosure has been developed with enhanced prey populations like chital and sambar

The Banni Grasslands in Gujarat, the largest of their kind in the Indian subcontinent, are now fully prepared to host cheetahs, officials confirmed.

A 600-hectare enclosure has been developed with enhanced prey populations like chital and sambar.

Facilities include quarantine and soft-release bomas, CCTV monitoring, and a veterinary centre. Fences prevent entry of other predators.

The Gujarat Forest Department, with Reliance Foundation's Vantara, has reintroduced spotted deer to restore ecological balance. Though ready, the National Tiger Conservation Authority will decide when cheetahs arrive.

They are expected to be introduced first at Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh, before Banni and Rajasthan's Shahgarh region receive them. *—PTI*

Displaced Manipuris stopped from returning home

IMPHAL, 16 JULY

Around 100 internally displaced persons (IDPs) were stopped by security forces on Wednesday from returning to their native village of Dolaithabi in Imphal East, Manipur.

Police said the group from a relief camp at Sajiwa, was halted near Pukhao Tezpur – just 2.5km from the village – due to safety concerns. Dolaithabi lies in a volatile fringe zone near Kangpokpi district, where ethnic violence erupted in May 2023.

One company of CRPF women personnel has been deployed. Authorities are holding talks with local leaders to resolve tensions. *—PTI*

Heavy rain alert in Kerala

T'PURAM, 16 JULY

The IMD issued orange alerts in Ernakulam, Idukki, Thrissur, Kannur, and Kasaragod districts **PHOTO: PTI**

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued an orange alert in five districts of Kerala on Wednesday, along with light rains in Delhi.

Water livels in various rivers in Kerala were in spate.

The IMD issued the orange alert in Ernakulam, Idukki, Thrissur, Kannur, and Kasaragod districts. It also issued a yellow alert in the remaining nine districts of the state.

An orange alert is issued while very heavy rains of 11 cm to 20 cm is predicted, and a yellow alert means heavy rainfall of 6 cm to 11 cm is expected.

Alerts were issued regarding the Uppala and Mogral rivers in Kasaragod district due to a rise in their water levels and people living on their banks were cautioned to remain vigilant.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicted light to moderate rains with thunderstorms in Delhi on Wednesday. *—Agencies*

'Couple' throws out newborn delivered on bus

MUMBAI, 16 JULY

A 19-year-old woman gave birth to a baby on board a bus in Maharashtra's Parbhani, but she and a man claiming to be her husband threw the newborn out, leading to the child's death, police said on Wednesday.

The incident occurred on Tuesday on the Pathri-Selu Road and came to light after an alert citizen spotted that something was thrown out of the bus, an official said.

"After delivery, the couple wrapped the newborn in a piece of cloth and threw it out of the vehicle," he said. *—PTI*

MARATHONER MOVED DOWN

SUV driver unaware of Fauja's identity: Cops

CHANDIGARH, 16 JULY

Dhillon allegedly hit Fauja Singh in the runner's native village of Bias in Punjab's Jalandhar district **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

The Canada-based man, who allegedly ran his SUV over Fauja Singh, the world's oldest marathoner, was unaware of the latter's identity and fled after he got scared.

The police arrested the accused, Amritpal Singh Dhillon, 26, from his Kartarpur home and seized his vehicle on 15 July.

Preliminary investigations revealed that Dhillon had been in a hurry when his car allegedly hit Singh. He was unaware of the identity of the victim. Being scared, he did not halt his vehicle and fled from the site.

The police said it was Dhillon's responsibility to stop the vehicle and take Singh to a hospital.

Dhillon had allegedly hit Fauja Singh (114) in the veteran runner's native village of Bias in Punjab's Jalandhar district when he was crossing the Jalandhar-Pathankot highway. Fauja Singh succumbed to injuries on 14 july.

According to villagers, Singh was tossed five to seven feet in the air after being hit by the vehicle.

Fauja Singh's son Harvinder Singh said that had the accused rushed his father to the hospital, he might have been alive. His family would not have taken any action against him.

The accused did not have any prior criminal record. He resided with his family in Canada and worked as a labourer on a work permit.

His vehicle, a Punjab-registered Toyota Fortuner, was identified through CCTV footage and fragments of its headlight and other parts recovered from the accident spot.

Nicknamed 'Turbaned Tornado', 114-year-old's career as a marathon runner began when he was 89, propelling him to the status of a global icon. *—PTI*

Five Delhi schools get bomb threats; 10 in 3 days

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Five prominent Delhi schools received bomb threats via email on Wednesday, prompting evacuations and emergency checks.

No explosives were found.

This marks the third straight day of such hoaxes, with ten threats sent to nine schools in total.

Police say the emails were routed through Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) and the dark web, making tracing difficult. Cyber experts and multiple agencies are investigating, treating the threats seriously due to rising public anxiety. Schools have increased security, following a 115-point government SOP. Parents expressed growing concern over repeated disruptions. *—PTI*

TO MA'AM, WITH LOVE

Two pregnant teachers, Neha Thakur and Sarita from the College of Horticulture and Forestry in Thunag, Mandi district in Himachal Pradesh were rescued by their students amid the continuous rain, which caused the power and water supplies to cut off in Seraj region. Due to the roads being blocked and no emergency services available, the men carried the two pregnant women on a makeshift palanquins through rough terrains resulting in a total of 11km trek Thunag to Bagsyad

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Troubled Boeing now under lens over fuel switches

The US aircraft manufacturer Boeing finds itself the focus of an international controversy once again, with India and South Korea ordering fuel switch inspections for Boeing jets after a 787-8 Dreamliner crashed in Ahmedabad last month.

Individual airlines in Japan and Singapore started their own checks as a precaution, according to Reuters.

The London-bound Boeing jet collided with a structure just minutes after takeoff. The crash killed 19 people on the ground and all but one of the 242 people onboard.

Indian officials are due to submit their findings regarding fuel switches by next Monday. The final report is likely to take a year or longer

PHOTO: PTI

Pilots discussed fuel intake

Indian officials are still trying to determine the cause of the tragedy, the deadliest aviation accident in a decade. However, the nation's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) published a preliminary report this week, claiming that the fuel switches for both of the plane's engines moved to the "cutoff" position almost immediately after takeoff, starving engines of fuel.

It is not yet known if this was done by one of the pilots or due to a mechanical fault. While the 15-page report does not provide a full transcript of the pilots' conversation, the authorities shared a snippet indicating confusion in the cockpit.

"In the cockpit voice recording, one of the pilots is heard asking the other why did he cutoff. The other pilot responded that he did not do so," AIIB officials said.

The report also notes that fuel switches moved to "run" seconds later. One of the engines apparently started cycling toward recovery, while the other continued to struggle. This was not enough to maintain flight and the plane crashed after less than a minute in the air.

'Cloud of mystery' surrounds AI crash

Commenting on the preliminary report, aviation expert Sanjay Lazar who has worked with Air India for 37 years, said that the document "raises more questions" than it answers. He also said it was "regrettable" that the full cockpit transcript has not been made public.

With the focus of the probe moving onto Boeing's fuel intake controls, Lazar pointed to two directives issued by the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) possibly relating to the issue.

In the first, non-mandatory directive in 2018, FAA warned that these fuel switches could have a fault and advising supervisory bodies to check them. The second one in 2022, however, was mandatory — and it focused on engine fire control panel and engine fire control switches. Recently, news agencies reported that Boeing was assured airlines its fuel switch locks were safe.

AI CEO says no issue with fuel quality

According to media reports, AI CEO Campbell Wilson issued an internal memo on Monday acknowledging that the preliminary AAIB report "provided both greater clarity and opened additional questions." "There was no issue with the quality of fuel and no abnormality with the take-off roll. The pilots had passed their mandatory pre-flight breathalyser and there were no observations pertaining to their medical status," he said.

Pilot group wants seat at table

On Tuesday, Singapore Airlines said it had completed the inspection of its 787 fleet, including planes used by its low-cost subsidiary Scoot, and confirmed all were functioning properly. Germany's Lufthansa group also said it rechecked fuel switches on its own 787s in the wake of the AI crash, and found no faults.

Indian officials are due to submit their findings regarding fuel switches by next Monday. The final report is likely to take a year or longer.

Meanwhile, the Airline Pilots' Association of India requested to be included as observers to provide "the requisite transparency" in the official probe.

Boeing's PR nightmare continues

Boeing has been struggling to recover from two fatal crashes in 2018 and 2019, both of them involving 737 Max jets. While multiple factors contributed to both tragedies, both were linked to plane's Manoeuvring Characteristics Augmentation System, which is designed to automatically push the plane's nose down if it detects a danger of stalling.

Between the 2019 crash and the latest incident in India, Boeing aircraft were involved in a series of smaller midair emergencies, such as a door ripping off of an Alaska Airlines 737 Max-9 in January 2024, or a 787 suddenly dropping during flight and leaving some 50 people injured in March 2024. Some two months later, one person died when a Boeing 777 hit turbulence while flying from London to Singapore.

In March 2024, a Boeing former employee who had recently been giving evidence against the company in a whistleblower suit died of what police later said was a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Weeks later, another whistleblower passed away after a short illness, after coming down with a fast-spreading infection and developing pneumonia.

—DW NEWS

LETTERS

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SALAR سالار

India's mega cities see high-level Ozone pollution

All mega cities in India, including Kolkata, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Chennai, saw high concentration of ground-level Ozone pollution this summer season, according to a new analysis by think tank Centre for Science and Environment (CSE).

A previous analysis had shown that Ozone, instead of particulate matter, was the main pollutant in Delhi's daily Air Quality Index (AQI) on several days this summer.

The new analysis by the CSE's Urban Lab highlighted that Ozone, unlike primary pollutants, is not released directly from any source.

It forms through complex chemical reactions involving nitrogen oxides (NOx), volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and carbon monoxide (CO), pollutants emitted by vehicles, power plants, industries and other sources of combustion.

These substances react in the presence of sunlight, leading to the formation of Ozone at the ground level.

Anumita Roychowdhury, executive director at the CSE, said: "If unchecked, this can become a serious public health crisis as Ozone is a highly-reactive gas and can be harmful even with short-duration exposures."She added that while cities in north India experience high Ozone levels in summer due to intense heat and strong sunlight, cities in warmer climates are also seeing consistent Ozone exceedance in other seasons.

The current policy focus must be expanded to include improved monitoring, the mitigation of this toxic gas and a reduction in high local exposures. Ozone mitigation needs drastic control over a range of gases from vehicles, industry and all combustion sources, Roychowdhury said.

Sharanjeet Kaur, deputy programme manager at the CSE's Urban Lab, said: "Inadequate monitoring, limited data and inadequate methods of trend analysis have weakened the understanding of this growing public health hazard across cities of India. Instead of merely averaging out the levels for the city, which is the standard practice to estimate the AQI, it is also important to adequately capture the high levels of local build-up and exposures in the hotspots and design mitigation strategies accordingly."

Between 1 March and 31 May this year, Mumbai recorded Ozone exceedance on 32 out of 92 days across its monitoring stations, a 42-per cent drop compared to the same period last year. The worst day in terms of spread was 29 March, when eight out of 31 stations reported exceedance. The highest ground-level Ozone concentration recorded was 90 micrograms per cubic metre.

In Kolkata, Ozone levels crossed the safe limit on 22 out of 92 days, a 45-per cent decline compared to last summer. The city also saw an overall improvement, with the average hourly Ozone peak dropping by 22 per cent.

Bengaluru saw Ozone exceedance on 45 of the 92 days, a 29-per cent increase from last year. The worst day was 31 March, when four of 14 stations recorded levels above the standard.

Hyderabad recorded 20 Ozone exceedance days, a 55-per cent drop compared to last summer. The highest Ozone level recorded in the city was 51 micrograms per cubic metre.

Chennai saw Ozone exceedance on 15 days this summer. No such exceedance was reported during the same period last year. In comparison, the city had three exceedance days in 2023 and 19 in 2022. The highest level this year was 64 micrograms per cubic metre.

—PTI

Bengaluru saw Ozone exceedance on 45 of the 92 days, a 29-per cent increase from last year

PHOTO: PTI

The new analysis by the CSE's Urban Lab highlighted that Ozone, unlike primary pollutants, is not released directly from any source

PHOTO: PTI

Climate change could force FIFA to rethink the World Cup calendar

Soccer had a fierce reckoning with heat at the recently concluded FIFA Club World Cup in the United States — a sweltering preview of what players and fans may face when the US co-hosts the World Cup with Mexico and Canada next summer.

With temperatures rising worldwide, scientists warn that staging the World Cup and other soccer tournaments in the Northern Hemisphere summer is getting increasingly dangerous for both players and spectators. Some suggest that FIFA may have to consider adjusting the soccer calendar to reduce the risk of heat-related illnesses.

"The deeper we go in the decade, the greater the risk without considering more dramatic measures, such as playing in the winter months and/or cooler latitudes," said Professor Piers Forster, director of the Priestley Centre for Climate Futures in Leeds, England. "I'm getting increasingly worried that we are only one heatwave away from a sporting tragedy and I would like to see governing bodies lean into the climate and health science."

Tournament soccer in June and July is a tradition going back to the first World Cup in 1930.

Since then, the three-month period of June, July and August globally has warmed by 1.05 degrees Celsius, according to the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Meanwhile, European summer temperatures have increased by 1.81 degrees C.

Climate scientists say that's a factor that needs to be considered when playing high-intensity outdoor sports like soccer.

"If you want to play football for 10 hours a day, they'll have to be the hours of the early morning and late evening," climatologist Friederike Otto from Imperial College, London, told The Associated Press (AP) in an email.

FIFA adapts

Extreme heat and thunderstorms made an impact on FIFA's newly expanded tournament for club teams. The Club World Cup was held in 11 American cities from 14 June to 13 July.

FIFA adapted by tweaking its extreme heat protocol to include extra breaks in play, more field-side water, and cooling the team benches with air fans and more shade.

Still, Chelsea midfielder Enzo Fernández said the heat made him dizzy and urged FIFA to avoid afternoon kickoffs at the World Cup next year.

The global soccer players union, FIFPRO, has warned that six of the 16 World Cup cities next year are at "extremely high risk" for heat stress.

FIFA President Gianni Infantino addressed the heat concerns on Saturday, saying the handful of World Cup stadiums that are covered would be used for day-time games next year.

Extreme heat could become an even bigger challenge at the following World Cup in 2030, which will be co-hosted by Spain, Portugal and Morocco. Games are scheduled to be played in afternoons and early evenings from mid-June to mid-July. All three countries have already seen temperatures rise above 40 degrees C this summer.

FIFA downplayed the heat risk in its in-house evaluation of the 2030 World Cup bid, saying "weather conditions are difficult to predict with the current development in global and local climate, but are unlikely to affect the health of players or other participants."

Auckland City's Gerard Garriga cools off under the sprinklers during a water break

PHOTO: PTI

Heat exhaustion

The physical effects of playing 90 minutes of soccer in direct sunshine during the hottest part of the day can be severe and potentially result in hyperthermia – abnormally high body temperatures.

- With temperatures rising worldwide, scientists warn that staging the World Cup and other soccer tournaments in the Northern Hemisphere summer is getting increasingly dangerous for both players and spectators.

"When players experience hyperthermia, they also experience an increase in cardiovascular strain," said Julien Périard of the University of Canberra.

"If core temperature increases excessively, exertional heat illness can occur," leading to muscle cramping, heat exhaustion, and even life-threatening heat stroke, he said.

Many sports events held in the summer adjust their start times to early morning or late night to minimize the risk heat-related illness, including marathons at the Olympics or track world championships. Morning kickoffs, however, are rare in soccer, where World Cup match schedules are often set with European TV audiences in mind.

It would be hard for FIFA to avoid day-time World Cup kickoffs given the packed match schedule as the number of participating teams increases from 32 to 48 in 2026.

Calendar rethink

Heat mainly becomes an issue when the World Cup is held in the Northern Hemisphere, because June and July are winter months in the Southern Hemisphere.

FIFA has stuck to its traditional June-July schedule for the men's World Cup except in 2022 when it moved the tournament to November-December to avoid the summer heat in Qatar. Something similar is expected when neighboring Saudi Arabia hosts the tournament in 2034.

However, moving the World Cup to another part of the year is complicated because it means Europe's powerful soccer leagues must interrupt their season, affecting both domestic leagues and the Champions League.

When and where to schedule the World Cup and other outdoor sports events is likely to become more pressing as the world continues to warm.

Athletes and even everyday people doing basic physical activities are now exposed to 28 per cent more of moderate or higher heat risk in 2023 than they were in the 1990s, said Ollie Jay, a professor at the University of Sydney who has helped shape policy for the Australian Open in tennis.

—PTI

PHOTO: X @MartaEFeito

Cuban minister quits over 'fake beggars' comment

HAVANA, 16 JULY

A Cuban minister who sparked criticism after saying that there are no beggars in Cuba, only people disguised as such, resigned on Tuesday. Cuban President said in a post on X that Minister of Labour and Social Security Marta Elena Feito Cabrera "acknowledged her errors and submitted her resignation". Her comments, made on Monday, went viral, prompting calls for Feito's impeachment and a wave of criticism in a country experiencing a tough economic situation in recent years.

Even Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel was critical. Without mentioning her by name, he wrote in X, "The lack of sensitivity in addressing vulnerability is highly questionable". *—PTI*

Drone attacks shut down Iraq's oil field

BAGHDAD, 16 JULY

Drones targeted oil fields in Iraq's semi-autonomous northern Kurdish region on Wednesday, the latest in a series of attacks in recent days that have put several oil facilities out of commission. No group has so far claimed responsibility for the attacks, which have exacerbated tensions between the central government in Baghdad and Kurdish authorities, as peace was seemingly on the cards between the sides.

The Kurdish region's anti-terrorism department said two drones attacked an oil field in the district of Zakho, causing damage but no injuries. DNO ASA, the Norwegian oil and gas company operating the field, said its operations were "temporarily suspended following three explosions early this (Wednesday) morning." *—PTI*

Thai woman held for blackmailing Buddhist monks

BANGKOK, 16 JULY

A woman has been arrested in Thailand for allegedly luring senior Buddhist monks into sexual relationships and blackmailing them for large sums of money. Wilawan Emsawat, in her 30s, was detained at her home near Bangkok on charges of extortion, money laundering, and receiving stolen goods. At least nine monks have been disrobed in a scandal that has shocked the country. Police say Wilawan received 385 million baht (£8.3 million) over three years, much of it spent on online gambling. One abbot quit the monkhood after she demanded 7.2 million baht, claiming to be pregnant. Authorities are now reviewing temple finances and misconduct laws. *—PTI*

Pak Airlines will resume services to UK after ban

ISLAMABAD, 16 JULY

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) is closer to resuming UK flights after the British government lifted restrictions on Pakistani carriers. The ban was imposed in 2020 following a PIA crash and a pilot licensing scandal. According to the British High Commission, the UK's Air Safety Committee removed Pakistan from its Air Safety List after confirming significant safety improvements. Airlines must still apply for operating permits via the UK Civil Aviation Authority. British High Commissioner Jane Marriott welcomed the decision, praising UK-Pakistan cooperation. With over 1.6 million people of Pakistani heritage in the UK, the move is expected to ease travel and support bilateral trade, currently worth £4.7 billion. PIA's privatisation process also continues. *—PTI*

Trump denies saying Ukraine should 'target Moscow'

Reports claimed he instigated strikes on Russian capital

A White House clarification said President Donald Trump was merely asking a question, not encouraging further killing **PHOTO: PTI**

WASHINGTON, 16 JULY

- Citing anonymous sources, media outlets claimed that Trump, during his private 4 July phone call with Zelenskyy, asked him if Ukraine could hit Moscow

US President Donald Trump said that Ukraine should not target Moscow after media outlets reported that he privately encouraged Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to escalate its attack.

Citing anonymous sources, media outlets claimed that Trump, during his private 4 July phone call with Zelenskyy, had asked if Ukraine could hit the Russian capital if US provided Kyiv with more long-range weapons. However, the White House issued a clarification, saying that Trump was "not looking to do that".

He was "merely asking a question, not encouraging further killing", the statement added. "He's working tirelessly to stop the killing and end this war".

RUSSIA STRIKES UKRAINE

Russian weapons pounded four Ukrainian cities overnight from Tuesday to Wednesday, injuring at least 15 people in an attack that mostly targeted energy infrastructure, officials said.

The latest bombardment in Russia's escalating aerial campaign against civilian areas came ahead of a 2 Sept deadline set by Trump for the Kremlin to reach a peace deal in the three-year war, under the threat of possible severe Washington sanctions if it doesn't.

Russia launched 400 Shahed and decoy drones, as well as one ballistic missile, during the night, the Ukrainian air force said. The strikes targeted northeastern Kharkiv, which is Ukraine's second-largest city, Zelenskyy's hometown of Kryvyi Rih in central Ukraine, Vinnytsia in the west and Odesa in the south. "Russia does not change its strategy," Zelenskyy said. "To effectively counter this terror, we need a systemic strengthening of defence: more air defence, more interceptors, and more resolve so that Russia feels our response."

Trump on Monday pledged to deliver more weapons to Ukraine, including Patriot air defence systems and threatened additional sanctions on Russia. *—PTI with agencies*

NATO Chief warns India, China over Russia trade ties

WASHINGTON, 16 JULY

Echoing US President Donald Trump's stance on imposing economic sanctions against countries maintaining trade ties with Russia if Moscow doesn't put an end to the conflict in Ukraine, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte on Tuesday urged India, China, and Brazil to reconsider their economic relations with Russia, warning of potential secondary sanctions, reported Reuters.

Rutte, speaking alongside US Senators Thom Tillis and Jeanne Shaheen, co-chairs of the Senate NATO Observer Group, noted Trump's increase of military support for Ukraine.

"President Trump said basically if Russia is not serious about peace talks within 50 days, he will impose secondary sanctions on countries like India, China and Brazil," Rutte stated. "My encouragement to these three countries, particularly, is that if you live now in Beijing or in Delhi, or you are the President of Brazil, you might want to take a look at this because this might hit you very hard," he said.

He further urged these countries to "make the phone call" to Russian President Putin to make him "get serious" about the peace talks. "I think it was a very smartly, wisely designed announcement yesterday by President Trump," Rutte stated.

On Monday, Trump threatened to impose 100 per cent "secondary tariffs" on Russia if a deal on Ukraine is not reached within 50 days, during his meeting with Rutte in the White House. *—ANI*

Senate Republicans green-flag Trump's USD 9B spending cuts

WASHINGTON, 16 JULY

Senate Republicans on Tuesday advanced President Donald Trump's request to cancel some USD 9 billion in previously approved spending, overcoming concerns from some lawmakers about what the rescissions could mean for impoverished people around the globe and for public radio and television stations in their home states.

The Senate vote was 50-50, with Vice President JD Vance breaking the tie.

A final vote in the Senate could occur as early as Wednesday. The Bill would then return to the House for another vote before it would go to Trump's desk for his signature before a Friday deadline.

Republicans winnowed down the President's request by taking out his proposed USD 400 million cut to a programme known as PEPFAR. That change increased the prospects for the bill's passage. The politically popular programme is credited with saving millions of lives since its creation under then-President George W. Bush to combat HIV/AIDS.

The President is also looking to claw back money for foreign aid programmes targeted by his Department of Government Efficiency and for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

SMALL COUNTRIES GET 10% TARRIFS

Trump said that he plans to place tariffs of over 10 per cent on smaller countries, including nations in Africa and the Caribbean.

"We'll probably set one tariff for all of them," Trump said, adding that it could be "a little over 10 per cent tariff" on goods from at least 100 nations. *—PTI*

2,000 National Guard troops withdrawn from Los Angeles

The Pentagon has said it is ending the deployment of 2,000 National Guard troops in Los Angeles, accounting for nearly half of the soldiers sent to the city to deal with protests over the Trump administration's immigration crackdown. Roughly 4,000 National Guard soldiers and 700 Marines have been in the city since early June. This comes as ICE said it can detain illegal immigrants without a bond hearing.

Trump says 'credible' Epstein files should be released

Trump said "credible" files on sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein should be released. He said that US Attorney General Pam Bondi should disclose "whatever she thinks is credible", after she first claimed that Epstein's client list was "sitting on her desk" only for the government to later say that the client list never existed at all. This comes amid growing backlash from his MAGA base.

Buildings destroyed in Israeli ground and air operations in northern of Gaza Strip **PHOTO: PTI**

Israel scales up bombings as ceasefire collapses in Syria

DAMASCUS/ WASHINGTON 16 JULY

Clashes raged in the southern Syrian city of Sweida on Wednesday after a ceasefire between government forces and Druze armed groups collapsed.

The Israeli army said that it struck near the entrance of the Syrian Ministry of Defence, after the army launched a series of airstrikes on convoys of government forces since the clashes erupted, saying that it is acting to protect the Druze minority.

On Wednesday, Israel Defence Minister Israel Katz said that the army "will continue to attack regime forces until they withdraw…and will also soon raise the bar of responses against the regime if the message is not understood".

Israeli forces launched air strikes on Syria's Suwayda, as fighting returned to the predominantly Druze city hours after the Syrian government declared a ceasefire.

Israel pounded Syria, despite a directive from the US reportedly asking Tel Aviv to stop its offensive against Damascus.

Syria has condemned Israel's intervention as being in violation of international law.

No official casualty figures have been released since Monday, but war monitor Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said more than 250 people had been killed as of Wednesday morning.

The latest escalation began with tit-for-tat kidnappings and attacks between local Sunni Bedouin tribes and Druze armed factions in the southern province, a centre of the Druze community.

Government forces that intervened to restore order have also clashed with the Druze fighters, while reports have surfaced of security forces carrying out extrajudicial killings, looting and burning civilian homes. *—Agencies*

20 killed in stampede near Gaza aid site

TEL AVIV, 16 JULY

An Israeli-backed American organisation that runs an aid programme in the Gaza Strip said on Wednesday that 20 Palestinians were killed near a distribution site. This comes as Israeli strikes killed 41 others, according to hospital officials.

The Gaza Humanitarian Fund said 19 people were trampled in a stampede and one person was fatally stabbed in the violence near a distribution hub in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis.

This comes as malnutrition rates among children in the Gaza Strip have doubled since Israel imposed sharp restrictions on the entry of food in March, the UN said on Tuesday.

A UN aid agency said it found around 1600 malnourished children under age 5 in June. *—PTI*

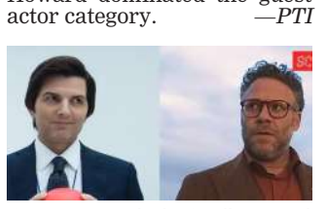
'Severance' gets 27 Emmy nominations as Apple TV+ leads

LOS ANGELES, 16 JULY

Apple TV+ has emerged as the standout platform in this year's Emmy nominations, with 'Severance' receiving 27 nods more than any other show and comedy 'The Studio' earning 23, tying a record for the genre.

The second season of 'Severance', a dystopian workplace drama, secured nominations for lead actors Adam Scott and Britt Lower, who play dual roles. Patricia Arquette and Tramell Tillman were recognised for supporting performances, while Ben Stiller received a directing nomination.

'The Studio', a satirical take on Hollywood created by Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg, outperformed established comedies including 'The Bear and Hacks'. Rogen was nominated for acting, writing and directing, and the show's A-list guest stars including Martin Scorsese and Ron Howard dominated the guest actor category. *—PTI*



'Severance' and 'The Studio' scored maximum nominations at the 2025 Emmys **PHOTO: X**

UK, France, Germany may restore sanctions on Iran

UNITED NATIONS, 16 JULY

The United Kingdom, France and Germany have agreed to restore tough UN sanctions on Iran by the end of August if there has been no concrete progress on a nuclear deal, two European diplomats said on Tuesday.

The three countries' ambassadors to the UN met on Tuesday in Germany to discuss a possible Iranian deal and reimposing the sanctions. The matter also came up in a phone call on Monday between US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and the foreign ministers of the three countries.

The State Department said the four spoke about "ensuring Iran does not develop or obtain a nuclear weapon".

The UK, France and Germany are part of an agreement reached with Iran in 2015 to rein in its nuclear programme, from which President Donald Trump withdrew the US during his first term, insisting it wasn't tough enough.

Under the accord that lifted economic penalties on Iran in exchange for restrictions and monitoring of its nuclear programme, a "snapback" provision allows one of the Western parties to reimpose UN sanctions if Tehran does not comply with its requirements. *—PTI*

Thank you, hero! Award-winning rat Magawa retires after five years of landmine-sniffing in Cambodia **PHOTO: X**

Giant rats help clear landmines in Cambodia

SIEM REAP/CAPE TOWN, 16 JULY

Rats may send some squealing, but in Cambodia, they have become indispensable in helping specialists detect land mines that have killed and maimed thousands in the Southeast Asian country.

The African giant pouched rats are on the front line, making their way nimbly across fields to signal to their handlers when they get a whiff of TNT, used in most land mines and explosive ordnance.

"They (rats) have never skipped a single one," said Mott Sreymom, a rat handler at APOPO, a humanitarian demining group that trains and deploys rodent detection teams.

After three decades of conflict in the previous century, remnants of war littered approximately 4,500 sq km of Cambodian land, affecting all Cambodian provinces and nearly half of the country's 14,000 villages.

Meanwhile, Prince Harry visited the African nation of Angola on Tuesday with a land mine clearing charity, repeating a famous trip his mother made in 1997, months before her death. Angola had set itself a goal to be landmine-free by 2025. *—PTI*

WILL MUNIR USURP ZARDARI?

Coup speculations rife in Pak amid civilian-military meeting

ISLAMABAD, 16 JULY

The latest meeting of Pakistan's top civilian and military leadership once again fuelled rumours that the Army Chief is aspiring to be the next President.

This is the third time this month that there have been widespread speculations about the change in Presidency, even though Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif last week dismissed rumours that Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir was vying for President Asif Ali Zardari's post.

The latest round of rumours came after Field Marshal Munir called on Sharif at the PM House shortly before the latter met Zardari at the President's house on Tuesday, The Express Tribune reported. The high-level engagements come amid growing speculation about a possible 27th Constitutional Amendment and rumours suggesting Zardari may step down, the report said. The speculation, largely fuelled by social media, hinted at behind-the-scenes efforts to replace the Parliamentary system with a Presidential form of government.

Asim Munir **PHOTO: X**

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said the speculations were "unfounded", but said the issue came up during the meeting between Zardari and Sharif.

The Defence Minister went on to categorically refute all the speculations, and said Zardari was apprised about the developments and he showed "full confidence" in the government and the current political system. "The President was fully aware of the issue and expressed his full confidence in the government," Asif told The Express Tribune, adding that Sharif briefed Zardari about the unconfirmed story and the subsequent developments. "It's all kite flying," he said.

The Defence Minister said Munir already held the highest office in the military and has earned massive respect following Pakistan's recent conflict with India.

"He [field marshal] doesn't need anything," Asif added.

Earlier on 11 July, Sharif strongly dismissing the rumours, calling them "mere speculations". *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Gold declines ₹500 to ₹98,870/10g

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Falling for the second straight session, gold prices depreciated Rs 500 to Rs 98,870 per 10g in the national capital on Wednesday due to continuous selling by stockists, according to the All India Sarafa Association. On Tuesday, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had declined by Rs 200 to close at Rs 99,370 per 10g. Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity slipped Rs 400 to Rs 98,400 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes). It had settled at Rs 98,800 per 10g in the previous market session. Silver had finished at Rs 1,12,000 per kg on Tuesday. Spot gold rose by USD 16.41 or 0.49 per cent to USD 3,341.37 per ounce in global markets. *—PTI*

Rupee falls by 18P, closes at 85.94 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 16 JULY

The rupee declined 18 paise against the US dollar to close at 85.94 (provisional) on Wednesday, tracking a strengthening American currency against major crosses overseas amid uncertainties over the India-US trade pact. However, renewed foreign capital inflows and sliding global crude prices supported the domestic unit, according to forex traders. At the inter-bank foreign exchange, the rupee opened weak at 86.02 against the dollar. It traded in the range of 85.74-86.05 during the day before closing at 85.94, down 18 paise from its previous close. In the previous session, the rupee appreciated 16 paise to close at 85.76 against the US dollar. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, dipped 0.07 per cent to 98.54.*—PTI*

Biocon Biologics's diabetes drug gets USFDA nod

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Biocon Biologics on Wednesday said it has received approval from the US health regulator to market a diabetes treatment medication. The company, a unit of Biocon Ltd, has received approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) for Kirsty as the first and only interchangeable biosimilar to NovoLog (Insulin Aspart). Kirsty is a rapid-acting human insulin analog indicated to improve glycemic control in adults and pediatric patients with diabetes mellitus. The medication will be available as a single-patient-use prefilled pen for subcutaneous use and a multiple-dose vial for subcutaneous and intravenous use, Biocon said in a statement. The approval expands Biocon Biologics' biosimilar insulin portfolio, which also includes Semglee (Insulin Glargine-yfgn Injection).*—PTI*

Govt permits NLC India to invest ₹7,000 cr in NIRL

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

The government on Wednesday allowed NLC India to invest Rs 7,000 crore in its wholly owned arm NIRL. The decision was taken by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The CCEA... has approved a special exemption for NLC India Ltd (NLCIL) from the prevailing investment guidelines applicable to Navratna Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs). This strategic decision enables NLCIL to invest Rs 7,000 crore in its wholly owned subsidiary, NLC India Renewables Limited (NIRL) and in turn NIRL investing in various projects directly or through formation of Joint Ventures, without the requirement of prior approval under the existing delegation of powers," an official statement said.*—PTI*

JioBlackRock gets Sebi nod to launch five MF schemes

The offerings include Nifty midcap, smallcap, G-index funds

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

JioBlackRock Asset Management, a 50:50 joint venture between Jio Financial Services and BlackRock, has received the markets regulator Sebi's approval to launch five mutual fund schemes.

These funds are JioBackRock Nifty 50 index, JioBlackRock Nifty 8-13 year G-Sec Index Fund, JioBlackRock Nifty Smallcap 250 Index Fund, JioBlackRock Nifty Next 50 Index Fund, and JioBlackRock Nifty Midcap 150 Index Fund, an update with Sebi showed on Wednesday.

Of these five schemes, four are equity-oriented index funds while one is a debt-oriented index fund.

On 7 July, JioBlackRock Asset Management announced the closure of its maiden New Fund Offer (NFO), recording a total investment of Rs 17,800 crore (USD 2.1 billion).

The fund was mobilised from three cash/debt mutual fund schemes -- JioBlackRock Overnight Fund, JioBlackRock Liquid Fund and JioBlackRock Money Market Fund.

The three-day NFO received an overwhelming response from over 90 institutional investors and more than 67,000 retail investors*PHOTO: File Image*

The three-day NFO received an overwhelming response from over 90 institutional investors and more than 67,000 retail investors.

Additionally, the direct plans offered by the schemes will only have an option for growth.

The lowest amount for applying a lump sum investment and SIP across all five funds will be Rs 500.

Tanvi Kacheria, Anand Shah and Haresh Mehta will be operating the four equity-based funds.

In contrast, the debt-based funds will be handled by Vikrant Mehta, Siddharth Deb and Arun Ramachandran.

According to a report, the company is preparing to start about a dozen debt and equity funds which will be aiming on small-ticket investments and reducing the cost by avoiding distributors.

The company is also planning to provide direct funding to the investors while avoiding major distribution channels. *—Agencies*

BOARD APROVES MOVE

SBI to raise ₹20K cr through bonds issue

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

PHOTO: PTI

State Bank of India (SBI) on Wednesday said it will raise up to Rs 20,000 crore via issue of bonds to domestic investors in current fiscal year.

In a regulatory filing, SBI said its board has "accorded approval for raising funds in INR by issue of Basel III compliant Additional Tier 1 and Tier 2 Bonds, up to an amount of Rs 20,000 crore to domestic investors during FY26, subject to GOI approval wherever required".

Shares of SBI were trading at Rs 831, up 1.74 per cent over previous close on the BSE.

Additionally,SBI's institutional placement of shares via QIP opened on Wednesday at a floor price of Rs 811.05 apiece.

In May, the board of the country's largest bank SBI had approved raising up to Rs 25,000 crore funds through public offer or private placement in the current fiscal. Thereafter, the shareholders had cleared the fundraising plans in June.

In a regulatory filing, SBI said its Committee of Directors at its meeting held on Wednesday approved the floor price of the issue at Rs 811.05 a share and authorised the opening of the issue on 16 July. SBI aims to raise up to Rs 25,000 crore through the Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP) of shares.

The floor price is at a 2.3 per cent discount to Wednesday's closing price of SBI shares on the BSE. The shares of SBI closed at Rs 831.55, up 1.81 per cent over the previous close on the BSE. *— PTI*

Cabinet sanctions ₹20K cr for NTPC

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

PHOTO: PTI

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved substantial investments by NTPC Limited and Neyveli Lignite Corporation India Limited (NLCIL) to accelerate India's renewable energy goals.

NTPC has been granted permission to invest up to Rs 20,000 crore through its subsidiary, NTPC Green Energy Limited (NGEL). NGEL will channel these funds into NTPC Renewable Energy Limited (NREL) and other related subsidiaries. This marks a significant increase from the previously approved limit of Rs 7,500 crore. The investment is expected to help NTPC achieve a renewable energy capacity target of 60 GW by 2032.

The government stated that this funding will enhance power infrastructure, ensure reliable electricity access, and generate employment opportunities. It is also expected to stimulate local entrepreneurship and contribute to broader socio-economic development.

Separately, the Cabinet approved an investment of Rs 7,000 crore by NLCIL into its wholly owned subsidiary, NLC India Renewables Limited (NIRL). The investment is exempt from the Department of Public Enterprises' 30 per cent net worth cap, granting NLCIL increased financial autonomy.

The move will help NLCIL's target of developing 10.11 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030, and up to 32 GW by 2047. Seven existing renewable projects (totalling 2 GW) will be transferred to NIRL under this plan. *—Agencies*

Sensex close higher at 63.57 points

MUMBAI, 16 JULY

PHOTO: PTI

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed marginally higher in a range-bound trade on Wednesday as investors stayed on the sidelines amid weak global market trends and tariff-related uncertainty.

Rising for the second day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex edged up 63.57 points or 0.08 per cent to settle at 82,634.48. During the day, it hit a high of 82,784.75 and a low of 82,342.94.

The 50-share NSE Nifty ended 16.25 points or 0.06 per cent higher at 25,212.05.

Among Sensex firms, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tech Mahindra, State Bank of India, Infosys, Adani Ports and ITC were the major gainers.

However, Eternal, Sun Pharma, Tata Steel, Tata Motors, Bajaj Finance and Bharat Electronics were among the major laggards.

Tech Mahindra rose by 1.94 per cent ahead of its financial results that were announced after market hours. The company posted a 30 per cent jump in consolidated profit after tax to Rs 1,128.8 crore in the June quarter of FY26 over the year-ago period.

Infosys rebounded by 1.5 per cent, helping the key indices close in green.

The BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.28 per cent and mid-cap index went up by 0.10 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, BSE Focused IT climbed 0.67 per cent, followed by IT (0.66 per cent), services (0.55 per cent), realty (0.50 per cent) and teck (0.49 per cent).

Commodities, capital goods, metal and industrials were the laggards.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.26 per cent to USD 68.55 a barrel. *— PTI*

ITC Hotels Q1 net profit rises 53%

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

ITC Hotels Ltd on Wednesday reported a 53 per cent jump in consolidated net profit at Rs 133.71 crore in the first quarter ended 30 June, 2025 on the back of higher revenue. The company had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 87.16 crore in the first quarter last fiscal, ITC Hotels said in a regulatory filing. Consolidated revenue from operations in the first quarter stood at Rs 815.54 crore as against Rs 705.84 crore in the corresponding period a year ago, it added. Total expenses in the quarter under review were higher at Rs 674.97 crore as compared to Rs 596.41 crore in the same period last fiscal. *— PTI*

HDBFS shares drop 4% after Q1 report

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

The shares of HDB Financial Services (HDBFS) on Wednesday dropped nearly 4 per cent after the firm reported a 2.4 per cent decline in net profit at Rs 568 crore for the first quarter of this financial year. The stock declined 3.66 per cent to Rs 810.30 on the BSE. At the NSE, it edged lower by 3.68 per cent to Rs 810.25. Its net profit was at Rs 582 crore during the June quarter of 2024-25, HDB Financial Services, a subsidiary of HDFC Bank, said in a regulatory filing on Tuesday. *—PTI*

Electric car sales penetration to surpass 7%, says report

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

PHOTO: GEMINI AI

India's electric car market is projected to surpass 7 per cent sales penetration by FY28, driven by new model launches and improved charging infrastructure, according to a report by CareEdge Advisory. However, the outlook hinges on the timely resolution of disruptions in the rare earth element (REE) supply chain.

Electric car sales in India have seen remarkable growth, rising from just over 5,000 units in FY21 to more than 1.07 lakh units in FY25, the report noted. While electric two- and three-wheelers dominate overall EV sales, the four-wheeler segment is now entering a high-growth phase, supported by both government policy and private sector investment. Public EV charging infrastructure has expanded significantly – from 5,151 stations in 2022 to over 26,000 by early FY25. *— PTI*

INDIRA IVF REFILES IPO PAPERS QUIETLY, GAUDIUMN TO FOLLOW

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

PHOTO: ANI

Indira IVF Hospital Ltd, a leading fertility services provider, has confidentially submitted draft documents to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) for a potential initial public offering (IPO), the company announced on Wednesday.

The move comes amid heightened investor interest in India's assisted reproductive technology (ART) sector, driven by greater awareness, expanding demand, and favourable demographics.

In its statement, Indira IVF confirmed it has submitted a pre-filed draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) to Sebi and the stock exchanges. This confidential filing route allows companies to withhold IPO details until later stages and does not commit them to proceeding with the listing.

Indira IVF had previously filed similar documents in February 2024 but withdrew them in March, around the release of a Bollywood biopic on founder Dr Ajay Murdia. The company denied reports of any Sebi directive, attributing the withdrawal to commercial considerations.

Meanwhile, Gaudium IVF and Women Health is also preparing to refile draft papers, reflecting renewed IPO momentum across India's fertility and women's health space. *— PTI*

CPI inflation to average 4% this fiscal, says Crisil

KOLKATA, 16 JULY

Rating agency Crisil, in its latest research report, said that the consumer price index (CPI)-based inflation is expected to average four per cent this financial year, as compared to 4.6 per cent last fiscal.

The agency said that food inflation is expected to be softer given the forecasts of above-normal monsoon by the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD).

Non-food inflation is expected to be subdued on the back of lower commodity prices, the report said.

CPI is the key measure used by the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the RBI for targeting inflation.

According to Crisil, GDP growth is seen at 6.5 per cent with downside risks. *—PTI*

23% WOMEN PARTICIPATING

Festive hiring may add 2.16L jobs: Report

MUMBAI, 16 JULY

PHOTO: FREEPIK

India's festive season is expected to generate over 2.16 lakh seasonal jobs in the second half of 2025, marking a 15-20 per cent year-on-year increase in gig and temporary employment, a report said on Wednesday.

The rise in festive hiring is being driven by sectors, including retail, e-commerce, BFSI, logistics, hospitality, travel, and FMCG, workforce solutions firm Adecco India said in the report.

Hiring activity has gained momentum in anticipation of upcoming festivals like Raksha Bandhan, Dussehra, Diwali, seasonal sales and the wedding season.

Many companies are advancing their hiring cycles to stay ahead of demand and ensure operational readiness for what is expected to be a stronger-than-usual festive period.

This year's hiring uptick is being driven by improved consumer sentiment, a favourable monsoon boosting rural demand, post-election economic optimism, and aggressive seasonal promotions, the report stated.

This report on hiring in seasonal jobs is based on data of Adecco India's client base, opening positions on various platforms and industry reports.

Meanwhile, compensation levels are expected to rise by 12-15 per cent in metro markets and by 18-22 per cent in emerging cities, said the report.

The report also found 23 per cent rise in women's participation in this year's seasonal hiring wave compared to the previous year, driven by a rising preference for flexible, short-term roles.

Further, it revealed that hiring in logistics and delivery is projected to rise by 30-35 per cent as companies scale up last-mile operations in preparation for peak festive demand. *— PTI*

Goods trade deficit could widen to $300B in FY26

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

PHOTO: FREEPIK

India's goods trade deficit is projected to widen to USD 300 billion in FY26, up from USD 287 billion in FY25, as weak global demand weighs on exports while resilient domestic consumption is expected to fuel higher imports, as anticipated by ICICI Bank Global Markets in its latest report.

The report attributes the sluggish growth in merchandise exports largely to tepid demand from non-US markets.

While shipments to the US have held up due to the front-loading of trade, exports to other key geographies have failed to gain momentum.

On a Year-on-Year (YoY) basis, the goods deficit was lower than the deficit of USD 20.8 billion seen in June 2024.

Meanwhile, the country's goods exports saw a mild contraction of 0.1 per cent YoY at USD 35.1 billion in June, driven by lower oil exports (-16 per cent YoY), while non-oil exports were better placed (2.9 per cent YoY).

The report further stated that India's relatively strong domestic economy is expected to maintain robust import demand, particularly for energy, electronics, and capital goods. *— ANI*

England penalised 2 WTC points for slow overrate

LONDON, 16 JULY

England have been penalised for maintaining a slow over rate during their dramatic third Test against India at Lord's, resulting in a deduction of two ICC World Test Championship (WTC) points and a 10 per cent fine on players' match fees. The International Cricket Council (ICC) took strict action against the Ben Stokes-led side following the third Test of the Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy. While England faced consequences, India escaped sanction.

Ben Stokes

England, who rose to second spot in the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) 2025–27 standings after a successful outing against India in the third Test at Lord's, have dropped to third spot after being penalised for a slow over rate in the match.

Ben Stokes' side beat India by 22 runs during the third Test on Monday to take a 2-1 series lead.

England, who rose to second spot in the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) 2025–27 standings after a successful outing against India in the third Test at Lord's, have dropped to third spot after being penalised for a slow over rate in the match. The ICC docked England two WTC points and fined the players 10 per cent of their match fees following the breach. *—PTI*

- England have been penalised for maintaining a slow over rate during their dramatic third Test against India at Lord's, resulting in a deduction of two ICC World Test Championship (WTC) points

TEAMS	M	W	L	T	D	N/R	PTS
Australia	3	3	0	0	0	0	36
Sri Lanka	2	1	0	0	1	0	16
England	3	2	1	0	0	0	22
India	3	1	2	0	0	0	12
Bangladesh	2	0	1	0	1	0	4
West Indies	3	0	3	0	0	0	0
New Zealand	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pakistan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
South Africa	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

FIFA announces details to apply for World Cup tickets

GENEVA, 16 JULY

Applications for tickets for the 2026 World Cup open Sept. 10, FIFA said on Wesnesday. The next edition of the tournament, which will be co-hosted by Canada, Mexico, and the United States, kicks off at the Azteca Stadium in Mexico City on 11June. Soccer's world governing body, FIFA, said that due to anticipated high demand, tickets would be released in phases. It did not say if it would use dynamic pricing, as was the case for the Club World Cup, which saw ticket prices fluctuate wildly. "We're looking forward to welcoming the world back to North America, as Canada, Mexico, and the United States host what will be the biggest and greatest sporting event ever," FIFA president Gianni Infantino said in a statement. "We encourage fans everywhere to get ready to secure their place, these will be the most coveted seats in world sport." *—PTI*

India U19 held to a draw by England U19

BECKENHAM, 16 JULY

The India Under 19 team was held to a tense draw after England Under 19 captain Hamza Shaikh led from the front with a fighting century on the fourth and final day of the first Youth Test here. Chasing a stiff target of 350, England ended on 270/7 in 63 overs, frustrating the visitors' push for a win that would have given them a 1-0 lead in the two-match series. Shaikh was the mainstay of England's resistance, scoring a composed 112 off 140 balls with 11 fours and two sixes here on Tuesday. He received crucial support from Ben Mayes, who struck a steady 51 off 82 balls (3x4s), and wicketkeeper-batter Thomas Rew, who chipped in with a brisk 50 off just 35 balls (8x4s).*—PTI*

Audit finds $21M financial irregularities in PCB

ISLAMABAD, 16 JULY

An audit report has found financial irregularities to the tune of more than rupees 6 billion ($21 million) and governance issues within the Pakistan Cricket Board dating back two years. The Auditor General of Pakistan's report for the 2023-24 financial year was published in The News and highlighted the non-recovery of outstanding sponsorship worth rupees 5.3 billion ($18.6 million) as the major discrepancy identified. PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi is the third person in four years to lead the sport's national administration, following Ramiz Raja and Zaka Ashraf. He is also a government minister. The report also questioned the rupees 63.39 million ($220,000) the PCB spent on meals for police and law enforcement personnel assigned for the security of foreign teams during international matches in Pakistan.*—PTI*

PHOTO: X/@DEEPIKA

Striker Deepika wins Magic Skill award

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Indian women's hockey team striker Deepika won the Poligras Magic Skill award for her field goal against the Netherlands during the Bhubaneswar leg of the 2024-25 FIH Pro League. The Poligras Magic Skill Award celebrates the most creative and skillful moments in the Pro League and is voted on by fans worldwide. The 21-year-old attacker earned global recognition for her breathtaking run and finish in the 35th minute during India's match against world no.1, the Netherlands, which they won in a shootout after a 2-2 draw.*—PTI*

Sindhu bows out of JO; Lakshya moves to 2nd round

Satwik-Chirag registered dominant straight-game win

TOKYO, 16 JULY

Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu endured yet another first-round exit, but Lakshya Sen and the men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty moved into the second round with comfortable victories at the Japan Open here on Wednesday.

The 30-year-old Sindhu, who is a former world champion, went down 15-21, 14-21 to Korea's Sim Yu Jin in the Super 750 tournament, marking her fifth first-round exit this year.

Satwik-Chirag and Lakshya, on the other hand, registered dominant straight-game wins.

After a slow start, Sindhu, who appeared rusty and error-prone and struggled with judgment of length, showed some fight in the first game, but Sim regained control to claim her first career win over the Indian star.

Lakshya Sen, PV Sindhu, and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy **PHOTO: PTI**

In the second, Sindhu quickly fell behind 1-6. Though she managed to level the score at 11-11, the Korean pulled away with ease to seal the match in straight games.

In men's doubles, Satwik and Chirag, currently ranked 15th in the world, defeated the Korean duo of Kang Min Hyuk and Kim Dong Ju 21-18, 21-10 in just 42 minutes.

The former world No. 1 pair took some time to settle in, with the Koreans matching them early in the first game.

But once the Indians found their rhythm, they were unstoppable, dominating the second game with clinical precision.

Meanwhile, Lakshya, who has struggled for form this season, making a string of first-round exits, looked sharp as he dispatched China's Wang Zheng Xing 21-11, 21-18.

The world No. 18 Lakshya was in complete control in the opening game, racing to an 11-2 lead before sealing it with minimal fuss. *—PTI*

AUSTRALIANS DOMINATE BOWLING

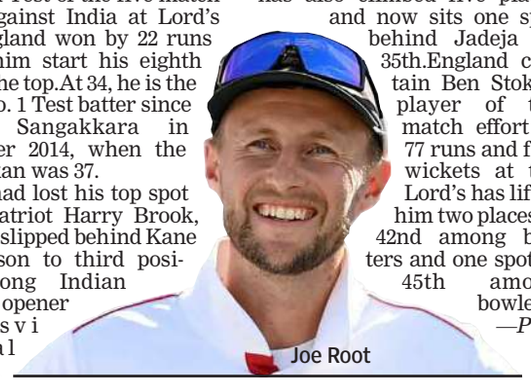
Root back as No.1 in Test rankings

DUBAI, 16 JULY

Star England batter Joe Root reclaimed the top position in the ICC men's Test rankings within a week of losing it, while India's all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja climbed to the 34th spot in the latest list released here on Wednesday.

Root's scores of 104 and 40 in the third Test of the five-match series against India at Lord's that England won by 22 runs helped him start his eighth stint at the top.At 34, he is the oldest No. 1 Test batter since Kumar Sangakkara in December 2014, when the Sri Lankan was 37.

Root had lost his top spot to compatriot Harry Brook, who has slipped behind Kane Williamson to third position.Among Indian batters, opener Yashasvi Jaiswal and vice-captain Rishabh Pant have dropped down a rung each and are currently placed fifth and eighth, respectively, while skipper Shubman Gill has also fallen three places to ninth. However, Jaeja has risen five places to 34th after scores of 72 and a fighting 61 not out at Lord's. KL Rahul, who made 100 and 39 in the same match, has also climbed five places and now sits one spot behind Jadeja on 35th.England captain Ben Stokes' player of the match effort of 77 runs and five wickets at the Lord's has lifted him two places to 42nd among batters and one spot to 45th among bowlers. *—PTI*


Joe Root

Animesh Kujur impresses but misses podium

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

India's national record holder, Animesh Kujur, clocked impressive times of 10.28s (100m) and 20.79s (200m) at the Spitzen Leichtathletik Luzern, a World Athletics Continental Tour Silver meet in Switzerland on Wednesday.

Although he missed the podium, Kujur was the best performer among India's six male athletes at the event, finishing eighth in the 100m and ninth in the 200m.His 4x100m relay teammates from the National Relay Carnival, Manikanta Hoblidar and Amlan Borgohain, endured a disappointing outing, with only Hoblidar completing the 200m in 21.36s.

Five Indians competed in the 100m: Kujur, , Jayaram DM, Lalu, and Gurindervir Singh. While the 22-year-old Kujur placed eighth, the others finished outside the top 15.

In the women's long jump, Moumita Mondal finished seventh with 6.34m, while two-time Asian Champion ships medallist Shaili had a disappointing outing, placing 10th with 6.13m and failing to qualify for the final three jumps. *—PTI*

HERO WPGT

Amandeep takes 2-shot lead despite late bogeys in 9th leg

HOSUR, 16 JULY

Amandeep Drall opened with a fine 3-under 69 to take a two-shot lead in the first round of the ninth leg of the Women's Pro Golf Tour here Wednesday.

Amandeep dropped two late bogeys on the 16th and the 17th holes, but despite that, she had a handy lead over seasoned Neha Tripathi and Seher Atwal, who carded 1-under 71 each at the Clover Greens.

Five other players, Vidhatri Urs, Anaggha Venkatesh, Jasmine Shekar, Sneha Singh, and Jahaanvie Walia, shot even par 72 each to be Tied-fourth.

Amandeep, who has had one win in eight starts this season, was a modest even par after seven holes with one birdie on the second, which was erased by a bogey on the sixth.She then had a great run from the eighth to the 12th with four birdies, including three in a row from the eighth to the11th.

Towards the end, she added a birdie on the 15th, at which point she was 5-under for the day. The two bogeys saw her slip to 3-under but keep the lead. *—PTI*

Praggu leads Indian charge at Las Vegas Freestyle chess; Gukesh opts out

LAS VEGAS, 16 JULY

R Praggnanandhaa found himself clubbed with Magnus Carlsen in the same group, while Arjun Erigaisi and Vidit Gujrathi were bunched together in the other pool of the 16-player Freestyle chess tournament to be held here.

World number one Magnus Carlsen will yet again start as the favourite for the title in this edition, which saw a lot of pre-event activities, including the participation of NBA players. The tournament proper starts late on Wednesday.

The event carries a total prize pool of USD 750,000, with 200,000 reserved for the winner. Each group has eight players in the lineup up and the top four will advance to the next stage, while the bottom half will play against each other.

R Praggnanandhaa finds himself clubbed with Magnus Carlsen in the same group. **PHOTO: PTI**

World champion D Gukesh is going to give the event a miss as he will be playing the main event of the Grandmaster tour in about a month. The 19-year-old Pragg nanandhaa will start his campaign against Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan, a player who was struggling at the previous edition of the Grand Chess Tour in Zagreb, Croatia. Carlsen will play the winner of the first edition, Vincent Keymer of Germany, in his opening round. American Hans Niemann will make his first appearance in the Freestyle chess tournament and take on Erigaisi in the opener. *—PTI*

PRACTICE ROUND

British Open schedule on Saturday to be adjusted because of loyalist parade, A general view of the course during a practice round before the 153rd Open Championship on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Arjun and Prashanth advance to quarterfinals in Swiss Open

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

The Indian pair of Arjun Kadhe and Vijay Sundar Prashanth on Wednesday moved to the quarterfinals of the Swiss Open with a straight-set win, but their compatriots N Sriram Balaji and Rithvik Bollialli suffered a first-round exit from the ATP 250 event in Gstaad, Switzerland.

Kadhe and Prashanth got the better of Nicolas Barrientos from Colombia and Miguel Rayes-Varela from Mexico 7-5, 6-3 in the opening round of the Euro 596,035 clay court tournament.

Balaji and Bollialli

However, the pair of Balaji and Bollipalli fell 4-6, 7-6(8) 7-10 to local wild card entrants Jakub Paul and Dominic Stricker in a hard-fought match. *—PTI*

UNCERTAINTY IS CONCERNING

Chhetri's first reaction to ISL suspension

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Former captain and top striker Sunil Chhetri on Wednesday said the current state of "uncertainty" in Indian football is very concerning and the sport's ecosystem is "worried, hurt, and scared" by the top-tier ISL being put on hold indefinitely.

Chhetri, who turns up for Bengaluru FC in the league, said he has been inundated with phone calls and messages expressing apprehensions about the future of the sport in the country.

"It began with worrying about how I am on borrowed time with what I have left in the tank. But speaking with players from across clubs, I've realised that my selfish problem isn't as important," the 40-year-old Chhetri posted on X.

"The current situation that Indian football finds itself in is very concerning. I've received a flurry of texts from players, staff members, physios, masseurs - not just from my club, but from other clubs as well.

"Everybody in the Indian football ecosystem is worried, hurt, scared about the uncertainty we are faced with," he added.

Sunil Chhetri

The ISL (Indian Super League) put the 2025-26 season "on hold" due to uncertainty surrounding the renewal of the Master Rights Agreement (MRA) between the event organisers and the All India Football Federation.

The league normally runs from September to April, and the current MRA between Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL), which organises the event, and the AIFF is scheduled to expire on December 8, 2025, by which time the ISL would be into its third month.

This was after a Supreme Court directive to AIFF in which the body was asked not to negotiate new terms of the MRA with FSDL, the apex governing body's commercial partner running the ISL, until a final judgment is delivered. *—PTI*

Oman hires Carlos as coach in push for WC qualification

MUSCAT, 16 JULY

Oman has hired Carlos Queiroz as its national team coach ahead of the autumn games that will determine if the country advances to the World Cup for the first time.

The veteran Portuguese tactician led Iran into the 2014 and 2018 World Cups and will take over with immediate effect.

Oman and five other countries, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Indonesia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar, have reached the fourth round of qualifying. From groups of three, the two winners will qualify for the 2026 World Cup next summer in the United States, Mexico, and Canada.

The fourth-round draw will be on Thursday in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The matches are in October. After those, there's one additional round the second-place finishers square off in November for a spot in a playoff tournament.

"This comes as part of efforts to improve the team's performance for upcoming games," the Oman Football Association said in a statement. *—PTI*

Carlos Queiroz